

with Asia, but they fail to distinguish between the raw materials of a historical development and the use to which these are put.

To emphasise and elaborate this distinction, to show that though historical Russia was on the margin of the West she was never outside Europe, is the aim of Professor Weidle's brilliant essay. Yet he is by no means a 'Westerniser' of the old school wishing merely to imitate and assimilate the rationalist civilisation of the West; nor does he, with the 'Slavophiles', regard his native country as a world apart. He shows indeed that Stalin accomplished the aims of both these schools of thought in the anonymous Eurasian Empire which combines Western science and dialectics with the nationalist self-sufficiency of the old Muscovy. But M. Weidle's primary concern is not with the political ancestry of the U.S.S.R. but with the much more important problem of Russia's spiritual existence.

He explains how the gulf between the Russian people and its rulers through the centuries prevented the formation of a Russian national consciousness. While in the West this problem was solved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Russia had to postpone it until the nineteenth century when European society was already beginning to disintegrate. The century of Pushkin and Dostoevsky which discovered Russia's spiritual home in the European past, simultaneously nourished the conflict between the revolutionary ideas of France and of German socialism. German Marxism finally prevailed, yet it prevailed at a time when intellectually it was already a spent force, but when Lenin had forged it into an instrument of revolution for that new generation which had neither faith nor hope in the cultural tradition of St Petersburg. According to M. Weidle the revolution has been, and is, a terrible purgatory for the Russian soul, but it is a purgatory for which the West has supplied the instruments of torture, and Russia will not be herself again until the West itself has recovered its faith once more in the common tree of Golgatha.

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GALIGAI. By François Mauriac. (Paris, Flammarion. Distributed in Great Britain by the French Book Club.)

THE LITTLE MISERY. By François Mauriac. Translated by Gerard Hopkins. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 9s. 6d.)

M. Mauriac's latest novel, though it presents the familiar domestic tensions, the appetites, frustrations, delusions and hatreds of a suffering and far fallen humanity which is peculiarly his own artistic domain, has its sombreness faintly relieved by a discreet light. The cathedral of Dorthe is, it seems to me, a symbolic presence, never far from sight, and therein clearly resides that reality of love which Galigai fails to discern beneath the unprepossessing appearance, the hasty and seemingly mechanical prayers of a few old women and schoolgirls. Against

this background, unobtrusive as it is, it is more clearly seen that the unhappy creatures of the novel are seeking but substitutes of love, substitutes that will always fail them. We easily imagine the fate in store for Marie and Gilles, that selfish pair of satisfied lovers whom M. Mauriac in his postscript calls, no doubt enjoying the irony, '*un couple heureux*'. The postscript is by no means the least interesting part of the novel, revealing that perpetual preoccupation of the author with the reactions of his co-religionists. Here the novelist gives an explanation that he could not for aesthetic reasons give in the body of his text, but which the Catholic feels that he must nevertheless provide. While the reader familiar with M. Mauriac's work may guess the implication of the last word of the novel, the stranger to it will probably not. We are left free, if we skip the postscript, to interpret the *quelqu'un* as we wish. This is the most ingenious of M. Mauriac's many attempts to reconcile the conflicting claims of his conceptions of art and religion, but to some people this ambiguity may not seem entirely honest. It goes without saying that *Galigai* is excellent reading, sustaining that emotional intensity that we expect from M. Mauriac.

Certainly, *Le Sagouin*, of which Mr Hopkins has now made a lively translation in *The Little Misery*, is the most harrowing of M. Mauriac's novels. As in *Galigai*, the central figure is one of the physically unprepossessing, though the misfortune is here treated from a different angle and the victim is seen in childhood. Despair in a child has already been portrayed by Bernanos in *Nouvelle Histoire de Mouchette*, but in very different circumstances. As God is present, however discreetly veiled, in *Galigai*, so is he absent, but insistently, in *Le Sagouin*. Not only is the Cernès chapel deconsecrated, but for little Guillou God is nowhere on earth, only in heaven, and he takes his life because no one has shown him otherwise; no one has shown him that he matters; he is starved of affection. M. Mauriac makes this despair of a child appear in the last pages of the novel as the probable vehicle of Grace for the atheistic schoolteacher, that hint of impending Grace beyond which the novelist never feels able to go. The difficulty that arises here is the acceptability of the schoolteacher's reaction to the death of Guillou, for the teacher is the one character whose authenticity seems questionable, appearing rather as an unusually charitable right-wing portrayal of what a left-wing intellectual ought to be like. On the other hand, Guillou, his mother and father, his grandmother and his Austrian governess, are all terribly convincing. M. Mauriac's achievement in this novel is to have made the despair of Guillou so plausible and to have stirred our compassion so deeply. We hope that the immature minds of both father and son hid from them the knowledge of what they were doing when they plunged in the mill-pond.

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