

The free spirits are people of fine courage and honour, caring deeply for individual liberty and responding sensitively to particular situations. Their anti-dogmatism and their passion for justice have had an important and healthy influence on our national life. In the struggle for women's rights or racial equality, liberal thought has often been far superior to that of orthodox, conservative Christianity; yet my analysis of characters with liberal sympathies has shown how their values very often make them unable to control events. I come upon the word 'characters' with a certain shock, for the preceding discourse is of a kind that belongs to historical, or political or sociological writing, not to literary criticism. Characters are not autonomous individuals with wills of their own. Whether they control or fail to control events is entirely up to their creator. When actual liberals fail to control events this may indicate a weakness in liberal humanism. And when fictional liberals fail to control events this may indicate the novelist's admission of a weakness in liberal humanism. But, in the latter case, the failure has no necessary correlation with the success or failure of the *novel*.

Mr Cox admits, *à propos* of *The Portrait of a Lady*, that many great works express a tension which the author himself cannot resolve. This is indeed true, and one might go further and say that without such unresolved tensions many works of literature which we treasure would not have been written at all. But the general tenor of Mr Cox's book is to suggest that the novelists he discusses, good as they are, would have been better novelists if they hadn't been liberal humanists. 'I shall argue,' he says at the outset, 'that the liberal emphasis on motives and consequences has led to sterility.' I find the charge unproven because it is, in literary terms, unprovable.

DAVID LODGE

TWO FRIENDS: JOHN GRAY AND ANDRE RAFFALOVICH, edited by Fr Brocard Sewell; St Albert's Press; 3 gns.

This pleasantly produced, expensively priced, limited edition of 450 copies, presents a collection of essays of which several have already appeared elsewhere and which many will think scarcely deserve so elaborate a presentation. They are in the main contributions to a legend, although the editor's *Biographical Outline* and Mr Iain Fletcher's critical essay on *The Poetry of John Gray* are both more severely realistic and critical. Gray and Raffalovich were selective in what they chose to leave to posterity, and it is very doubtful if a thorough biographical study of either could now be achieved, even if it were thought desirable. Some corrections of fact should be noted. There is no collection of unpublished Gray Mss 'in that tantalizing safe in the Dominican house at Edinburgh'. (The safe is as phantastic as much else in the story.) There is documentary evidence—though not in Edinburgh—which contradicts the tale of Raffalovich's aversion to the Dominican church in Pendleton. The friends were not the founders of the Dominican priory in Edinburgh—they disapproved apparently of university

chaplains. It may be added that the young Father Gray's work among the poor in St Patrick's parish, Edinburgh, was hardly unusual; it was the lot of most young priests in the archdiocese to work as curates for a time in a poor district. In justice to his memory it should be said that it is doubtful if he would have appreciated the romanticisation of his pastoral work, or the attempt to prolong the artificiality of the nineties.

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

THE RIGHT TO LIFE, by Norman St John-Stevas; Hodder and Stoughton; 2.6d.

L'ENFANT MALFORMÉ, Centre D'Etudes Lannec; Lethielleux; 6.75 F.

Mr St John-Stevas has already given us in *Life, Death and the Law* one of the most learned and convincing expositions of Catholic teaching as expressed in the law of England and America. He has now produced a popular paper-back on similar themes which breaks fresh ground in a topical chapter on the Liège thalidomide baby trial, but shows the same talent for clear thinking and writing as his larger thesis. The *motif* that runs through all these six essays is that the principle of the sanctity of life is one of the fundamentals on which western society is based. As the author points out, the principle is not self-evident, it rests ultimately on the Christian doctrine of the worth of redeemed man in the sight of God. Further it is not absolute, for it has always been accepted that the Christian state has the right to take the life of certain criminals, and of aggressors in an unjust war. With the decay of Christian belief, this line of reasoning has fallen into disuse and has been replaced by an 'ill-formulated philosophy of natural rights', which is proving an insecure basis for defence against muddle-headed reformers. Hence the urgent need—and the value—of Mr Stevas' contribution.

In his first four essays, which deal with the Liège trial, abortion, suicide and euthanasia, Mr Stevas is able to show that the historic attitude of the Church, and the present position of the English law is actually more humane than the propositions of the humanist reformers. Thanks to the insistence of the obstetricians (Catholic and non-Catholic) who have conceived it their duty to try and save *both* mother and child, it is now recognised that 'therapeutic' abortion is very rarely indicated. By far the commonest medical reasons for abortion nowadays are in psychiatric cases and even in this ill-defined field it is becoming discredited. The demand (and there is an influential and wide-spread demand) for an extension of facilities for abortion is in fact based almost exclusively on so-called social grounds, though this not always admitted publicly. As for suicide, legislation in 1961 removed attempts at self-destruction from the penal code but they remain a disaster and Mr Stevas rightly emphasizes the need for more energetic medical and social measures for prevention. A total of over 5,000 suicidal deaths a year and some 30,000 attempts is worthy of attention in a Christian state.