

catechumen. The problems we face result from the survival of the structures of a Church 'in Christendom' among a people who no longer live in such a world. Present law demands of everyone a faith which in fact is manifested only by a privileged minority; and with these there is little or no problem.

In fine, we are inclined to carry the problem to another level, and ask if *any* solution is possible while the Church continues to receive into her fold infants who will—for one reason or another—be condemned to remain, *in the faith*, at an infant or pre-evangelised level. Everything is asked, but very little is given.

JORDAN BISHOP, O.P.

A HANDFUL OF DUST, by Evelyn Waugh; Chapman and Hall; 21s.

After thirty years, *A Handful of Dust* remains in the first rank of Mr Waugh's novels: a chilling blend of the farcical, the tragic and the macabre. It is the first of his essays in 'serious' fiction, and in its treatment of the doomed Gothic hero—not yet a Catholic hero—it points forward to such ambitious later novels as *Brideshead Revisited* and, in particular, *The Sword of Honour* trilogy where Guy Crouchback, a more complex and developed version of Tony Last in the early novel (both have appropriately suggestive surnames), realises the insufficiency of the gentlemanly ideal and is stripped of his romantic illusions. This new edition of *A Handful of Dust* is supplied with an 'Alternative Ending', and Mr Waugh explains in an introductory note how it came to be written; it appears that the harrowing penultimate chapter of the novel called 'Du Côté de Chez Todd', in which Tony ends his days having to read Dickens to Mr Todd in the Brazilian jungle, was written first and originally published as a short story. An American magazine wished to serialize the novel but was unable, no doubt for copyright reasons, to reprint 'Du Côté de Chez Todd': to accommodate it, Mr Waugh wrote the alternative ending which is now reprinted. The novel in that version was a much slighter but a more homogeneous story; the whole South American episode was dropped, and in the alternative ending Tony Last returns to England having merely idly cruised for a few months:

It had been an uneventful excursion. Not for Tony were the ardours of serious travel, desert or jungle, mountains or pampas; he had no inclination to kill big game or survey unmapped tributaries. He had left England because, in the circumstances, it seemed the correct procedure, a convention hallowed in fiction and history by generations of disillusioned husbands. He had put himself in the hands of a travel agency and for lazy months had pottered from island to island in the West Indies, lunching at Government Houses, drinking swizzles on club verandahs, achieving an easy popularity at Captains' tables; he had played deck quoits and ping-pong, had danced on deck and driven with new acquaintances on well-laid roads amid tropical vegetation. Now he was home again. He had thought less and less of Brenda during the passing weeks.

In this version, Tony returns to Hetton and Brenda, who by now has been abandoned by John Beaver. They settle down to a flat loveless life, trying to pick up the threads of their former existence. The novel ends on a mute ambiguous note, with Brenda expecting a baby and Tony clandestinely keeping on their flat in London, though pretending to Brenda that he has let it. This version of the novel centres the interest much more squarely on Brenda and Tony as a couple, and less on Tony as a doomed romantic; it becomes a fairly conventional story of the failure of a marriage in fashionable society, and the full implications of Tony's Gothic aspirations are not brought out. In the definitive version, incorporating Tony's South American expedition and his search for the 'City', Mr Waugh achieved a far greater imaginative power, and, in Tony's ultimate fate, a horrifying originality. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see the alternative version, though the interest is rather more bibliographical than critical.

BERNARD BERGONZI

THE BETTER SONG, by Luc Estang; Hodder and Stoughton; 21s.

PRELUDE TO A WEDDING, by Barbara Lucas; Barrie and Rockliff; 18s.

Although both these novels have a background of Catholicism, in M. Estang's work it plays such an important part that both believers and non-believers are swept up in the drama. But what a joyless affair this religion is; indeed the title is taken from a Nietzsche quotation: 'they would have to sing better songs for me to be able to believe in their Saviour; his disciples would have to look more saved'. The hero, Octave Coltenceau, has been brought up in a nineteenth century French Catholicism with its hints of Jansenism, and the story is seen entirely through his eyes. He is a middle-aged lawyer's clerk, outwardly happily married with children, but in truth tormented, scrupulous and physically unfulfilled, so that he is ripe for seduction by an attractive near-pagan widow, Marie-Laure, perhaps the most sympathetically drawn character in the novel. The story consists for the most part of their affaire and Octave's dilemma as a consequence. Other characters only seem to exist in order to illuminate his problem, a problem more religious than human: although we have the eternal triangle, it is really not his wife but God who is the third person. Octave's personality plays a greater part in all this than even he himself realises; if he had not already been brought up in a religion of this sort, it would have been necessary for him to find one. His whole development is revealed in a series of flashbacks, cleverly scattered throughout the story, placed so as to show the fruits of his mother's coldness and austerity during childhood (coldness the result of a renunciation parallel with the one he now feels it his duty to make) and the way this was reinforced by the religious education of his schooldays. In spite of another of the author's introductory quotations, Peguy's: 'it is not given to man simultaneously to achieve his happiness and his salvation', a