himself said about the letters of the novelist W. H. Hudson could be applied to *The Collected Letters* as well: "I was glad to have the man brought close to me" (*CL*8, 233). These volumes may offer less comprehensive information on Conrad's life than a biography can provide, yet it seems to me that the sensitive medium of the letter is the best way to bring him closer to us.

Balázs Csizmadia

Notes

1. Frederick R. Karl, general editor's introduction, *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 1: 1861–1897*, eds. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (1983. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), p. xxvii. Henceforth, all parenthesised references to *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad* are marked by *CL*, followed by the volume and page number.
2. See G. Jean-Aubry, ed., *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1927).
3. See Jeremy Hawthorn, review of *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, Volumes 8 and 9, *The Joseph Conrad Society (UK) Official Website*, 20 March 2008, 15 September 2008 <http://www.josephconrad society.org/13Hawthorn%20-%20Review .pdf>. Hawthorn's review was to be published in the Autumn 2008 issue of *The Conradian* but was available only in electronic form when I was writing my own review. For the achievement-and-decline thesis, see Thomas C. Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957). Moser argues that Conrad's work after 1911 shows signs of enervation and qualitative decline.
4. F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p. 18.

Surviving Modernism

Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge, *British Fiction after Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

What if a literary movement is so powerful that it wipes out all other possibilities while alive and leaves an unprecedented vacuum after its dispersal? Modernism devoured everything around it, incorporation indeed always stood in the very core of its nature. Criticism on modernism has been extensive and manifold, but what came after has had difficulty leaving the shadow cast by the modernist output. Admittedly, the present volume aims to give a new literary and historical context for a generation of writers whose work has been hard to characterize. In many ways what we have at hand is a comprehensive guidebook; as co-editors Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge sum up: "This collection aims to restore some significance to a critically awkward phase of twentieth-century writing. Focusing on the years between the late 1930s (just after modernism) and the late 1960s (just before postmodernism), its contributors suggest what it meant for writers to work in the wake of modernism's achievements" (1–2).

Although the title of the collection is *British Fiction After Modernism*, the co-editors also attempt to rethink mid-century British fiction: "When we say

that we are interested here in what happened to the novel 'after' modernism, then, we do not quite mean 'after' in an innocently chronological sense, but that many of these writers are so indebted to modernism that they have to be read in relation to it" (4). Right at the beginning of the introductory section the reader is left with little doubt that he is in for a surprise: besides the explicit focus on this unjustly neglected period, the question remains whether there really is anything that could survive the sweeping force of modernism. Perhaps the single most decisive literary trend of the twentieth-century *will* remain a constant reference point; surely, "[t]hese writers knew there was no returning to a time before modernism" (8).

The list of contributors is rather impressive, and it invariably urges the reviewer to take a comprehensive approach and avoid the exclusion of any piece of writing that contributes to the present collection. Nonetheless, I have consciously taken the liberty of leaving the bigger mass of the essays out of consideration and focus on just a selected few. I have taken two essays, Steven Jacobi's and Andrzej Gasiorek's, as examples of the fascination with an individual literary figure, namely Angus Wilson and Graham Greene, respectively, and two other essays, Bernard Bergonzi's and John Mepham's, as examples of the concern with a single decade of British literature, namely the 1960s and the 1930s, respectively. The importance of these two decades is also highlighted by the co-editors, while Greene and Wilson nicely fit in the line of established yet controversial authors of the time. Furthermore, it is also to be noted that the order of the essays in the volume does not correlate with the order of my reviewing them, for reasons of convenience in the argument. My selection is mainly an account of a personal appraisal of the chosen critical texts, which to my mind also sheds light on how the rest of the MacKay and Stonebridge volume manages to handle whatever came after modernism.

In Angus Wilson one may detect an almost erotic fascination with the English language, resurfacing mainly in the tense dichotomy of humour and seriousness. If there is anything that can be safely stated about Steven Jacobi's "Angus Wilson: No Laughing Matter and *No Laughing Matter*," it would be its smooth adaptation to Wilson's own style of writing while presenting "a writer who was celebrated for short stories and novels which blended wit, acute social observation and a love of the macabre" (121). What is there in Wilson is all there in Jacobi, too: a "habitually waspish, satirically denigrating wit," a "savage and direct" attitude towards our "fellow mortals" and an "intelligently persuasive deployment of pitiless humour" (121). On the same account, Jacobi avoids being falsely overheated by admiration towards Wilson but cannot, or rather *will not*

avoid paying homage to the author of *No Laughing Matter* (1967) by cracking up witty phrases fit for Wilson's magnitude. Perhaps one of the most lucid examples of this would be the closing sentence of Jacobi's study on Wilson: "A sense of humour is a serious business, and not having one isn't funny" (130). In many ways it sounds so appropriate that it could easily become the single best catchphrase of Wilson studies in general. Thus, while reflecting upon Wilson's double-edged attitude towards laughter (fun versus seriousness), Jacobi's own writing is packed with traces of humour and irony all through. Indeed, the Jacobi text has been born in the heritage of that distinctive Wilsonian self-reflexive criticism it has chosen for its subject matter. Yet obviously in the halo of Wilson's satiric heritage, Jacobi never fails to take himself seriously enough, especially when gathering data from the Wilson oeuvre. Although everything in Jacobi's universe revolves around *No Laughing Matter*, he always finds room to mention either "Wilson's short stories and early novels – *The Wrong Set and Other Stories* (1949), *Such Darling Dodos and Other Stories* (1950), *Hemlock and After* (1952), *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956), *A Bit Off the Map and Other Stories* (1957) and *The Middle Age of Mrs Eliot* (1958)," or novels from the author's mature period, such as *As if by Magic* (1973), where Wilson is finally willing to undermine his own notorious defensive humour (124). And Jacobi does all the above with a Wilson-like linguistic tour de force.

Bernard Bergonzi's condensed overview of a single year of British fiction after modernism is rather exhaustive, and perhaps not only in one way. The argument moves along a single clear-cut line with no, or little deviation from its set course: even when Bergonzi talks about novels and their writers before or after 1960, he does so with a sole purpose, namely to pave the way for *his* selection of novels published in 1960. Each road for Bergonzi leads to British fiction in 1960 (the title of his study bears witness to it: "The British Novel in 1960"). He has the preconception in mind that that year really was something of an *annus mirabilis*, similar to 1954, the year which saw the first novels of Kingsley Amis (*Lucky Jim*), William Golding (*Lord of the Flies*) and Iris Murdoch (*Under the Net*). And when Bergonzi meticulously lists names and titles in an alphabetical order, his mentioning of the two years 'on the same page' finally becomes clear. In fact, intentionally without doubt, he launches his essay with an impressive list of novels published in 1960: Kingsley Amis's *Take a Girl Like You*; Lynne Reid Banks's *The L-Shaped Room*; Stan Barstow's *A Kind of Loving*; Anthony Burgess's *The Right to an Answer* and *The Doctor is Sick*; Lawrence Durrell's *Clea*; David Lodge's *The Picturegoers*; Colin MacInnes's *Mr Love and Justice*; Anthony Powell's

Casanova's Chinese Restaurant; C.P. Snow's *The Affair*; Muriel Spark's *The Bachelors* and *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*; David Storey's *This Sporting Life* and *Flight into Camden*; and Raymond William's *Border Country*. These are the novels Bergonzi places under thorough examination, and in one single essay he succeeds in doing so with such enthusiasm and skill that their place within the British literary canon is ultimately rendered unquestionable. His persuasive force partly derives from the fact that he quite often uses the first person singular, for instance when he says, "[w]ith David Lodge's *The Picturegoers* we cross the river [Thames], to the southeastern suburbs where he – and I – grew up" (209). Bergonzi not only supplies first-hand information to the reader but also evokes a general sense of being there, being lucky enough to be part of it all: "I am old enough to remember the excitement they caused [Angus Wilson's collections of short stories *The Wrong Set* (1949) and *Such Darling Dodos* (1950)], and which I shared when I read these books soon after their publication" (204). Bergonzi also appears to have some additional information on the young Cambridge don called Lester Ince, a lesser character in C.P. Snow's *The Affair*: "Ince is evidently meant to be a version of Kingsley Amis – an identification that Snow himself indeed once confirmed to me" (205). In addition to its appealing clarity, the strength of Bergonzi's essay lies in its critical tone based on its author's personal experience and his willingness to voice justifiable literary stances. Bergonzi is not afraid, on the one hand, to claim that, although David Lodge's *The Picturegoers* "is ambitiously organised . . . parts of it are patently immature" and, on the other hand, to state that David Storey's *This Sporting Life* "is original and powerful, and I regard it as the best first novel in 1960" (210). Even with the extensive use of the first person singular, which of course is a mark of subjectivity carrying a good deal of value judgement, or perhaps especially because of that, the Bergonzi text is a delightful touch worth including in the present volume.

In his essay entitled "Varieties of Modernism, Varieties of Incomprehension: Patrick Hamilton and Elizabeth Bowen," John Mepham embarks on exploring the immediate heritage of what is most widely considered as the heyday of modernism, namely the 1920s. Mepham points out that "[a]fter a decade of uncompromisingly experimental modernist fiction in the 1920s," the upcoming years saw some writers who still can be found in the halo of modernist findings and who still "employed and explored experimental fictional tendencies" (59). That high modernism left its fingerprint on literary achievements to come is a statement not at all surprising or novel; but Mepham goes even further by claiming that "post-1930s' fiction broke not only with nine-

teenth-century traditions but also with the conventions developed in the period of avant-garde modernism, for example in the works of Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf" (59). His approach is double-edged: while accepting the apparent and undisputed force of modernism (Mepham is cautious enough to avoid futile disputes with devoted believers in perhaps the most decisive literary movement of the twentieth century), he sets out to do justice to British fiction born in a period overshadowed by modernism. And indeed, with the use of a conservative English fit for a retired university professor, Mepham's achievement is more than remarkable: a revitalisation of the neglected. His choice to focus on the periphery is a rather bold approach, even if not unheard before; but it is especially justifiable in the heritage of modernism and is deeply routed in a soil unimaginable without the modernists. In actual fact, Mepham happily admits the grandiosity of such geniuses as Joyce and Woolf; what he refuses to accept is that life ceased to exist after them. As an example, probably the most interesting element in Mepham's whole argument is formulated around the entangled concepts of, as he calls them, *intersubjectivity* and *inner subjectivity*. According to Mepham, in the writings of Patrick Hamilton and Elizabeth Bowen characters linger in interactions "in the social context within which the personal goings on take place" (*intersubjectivity*); whereas in the modernists like Joyce and Woolf "the major technical innovations . . . centre on the rendering of what is going on in characters' minds when they speak, on their inner worlds, on their stream of consciousness (a notoriously elusive concept)" (*inner subjectivity*) (60). Furthermore, and opposing David Lodge, Mepham doubts that modernism was "uninterested in talk – after all there is hardly a scene in *Ulysses*, in *Mrs Dalloway* or *To the Lighthouse*, or in the stories of Katherine Mansfield, that is not the setting for a conversation" (60). One may safely say that with a fair devotion and a sense of propriety Mepham manages to paint an attractive retrospective panorama of the literary landscape *after* modernism, which consists of – despite Mepham's indication in the title of his essay – not just varieties of modernism.

Graham Greene, too, comes after modernism. To Andrzej Gasiorek the place Greene took in British fiction becomes clearly identifiable only when one looks at him from the perspective of modernist writers such as Eliot, Joyce and Pound. Perhaps not surprisingly, what Gasiorek has to say about Greene would be meaningless without the great predecessors, who lived and worked in an era immediately after the First World War. Gasiorek follows in the safe line of those critics who hold 'the Great War' responsible for the soaring of the modernist literary trend: "The First World War has long functioned as a convenient point of depar-

ture for discussion of what we now think of as the period of high modernism that immediately followed it" (17). Admittedly, without that devastating historical upheaval, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, for instance, could never have been born. Having quickly sketched the decisive members, the timeline and the background of modernism, Gasiorek can now go on to render justice to Greene, who was *not* part of it all; as the title of his essay "Rendering Justice to the Visible World: History, Politics and National Identity in the Novels of Graham Greene" equally testifies, Gasiorek intends to do as much justice to Greene's novels as to their author. Greene's most apparent saving grace as to why he was never part of modernism is the simple fact that "Greene was just ten in 1914, and he came to maturity within the post-war milieu" (18). The most intriguing question that Gasiorek can ask as the next step of his argument is "[h]ow, then, does Greene position himself in relation to his immediate predecessors?" Since it was Greene's own personal dilemma in the first place, which arguably kept him preoccupied throughout his life, the question is all too valid. Gasiorek acknowledges Greene reaching back a little further in literary history when he claims that "[i]n fine, he [Greene] chooses to skip a generation, bypassing figures such as Joyce, Lewis and Pound (although Eliot was important to him) so as to proclaim his affinity with writers such as James, Conrad and Ford" (19). That so far does not sound either surprising or new – since that is exactly how Greene himself would identify his own literary stance – but then Gasiorek becomes overtly critical by saying that "[b]y invoking them, Greene not only signals his allegiance to one kind of writing rather than another but also distances himself from direct competitors and aligns himself with the safely dead" (20). Nonetheless, this is Gasiorek at his most vicious. By regarding him as a lesser writer than the modernists, he is far from trying to decipher Greene in any way. On the contrary, Gasiorek holds the writer of *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), to mention just one of Greene's most well-known novels, in great esteem. The most obvious way he can pay homage to Greene is by dissecting a selection of his novels: *It's a Battlefield* (1934), where the author's tone of scepticism peaks in describing a society splintering into fragments; *England Made Me* (1935), where the individual's escape from the past and uncontrolled insertion into the selfish present has made him anachronistic; *A Gun for Sale* (1936), where the protagonist is a victim of "extreme poverty"; and *Brighton Rock* (1938) and *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), where "sentiments such as patriotism, duty and justice no longer seem credible" (26–27). And throughout his study Gasiorek never forgets to bear in mind and remind his readers too that his "Greene comes *after* modernism, *after* the great upheavals and experiments

that have now been so belauded and canonized" (19).

As I have intended to suggest, every piece of writing included in Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge's collection of essays on British fiction after modernism is very much like a soil sample taken from a distinctive literary land, each helping the reader to set up a definitive diagnosis of the status of that land. Bit by bit these samples support one another simply by originating from the same time period, and thus the individual pieces also add up to a whole to be analysed. By doing so these critical texts mimic the way their subject matters, the actual novels of the mid-century English literary arena, line up neatly to form a unified entity. The reader at the same time (either by reading the novels or their critical reviews) will remain the ultimate benefactor, since the co-editor's collection eventually grants the pleasure of sampling to him. Now what has survived modernism and what has survived of modernism is down to the reader to decide; but that the present volume does function as a kind of long awaited literary compass is undeniable.

Krisztián Zsolt Bakó

Other Countries

István D. Rácz, *A másik ország: Az angol költészet 1945 után* [The Other Country: English Poetry after 1945] (Debrecen: Kossuth, 2006)

The problems of a critic who chooses to write an extensive and comprehensive survey of the last fifty years' poetry are completely different from the difficulties of research in any period prior to our own. His or her main task is not only to rethink or relate to the already existing list of well-known and widely researched works of art, but to freeze the running film of contemporary poetry with a firm hand and to sketch the main outlines of the scene quickly, but precisely. Inevitably, the choice of authors and texts in itself is an interpretation of the present-day literary scene, making the study even more intriguing for the interested reader.

After a book on Larkin[1] and a monograph on dramatic monologue,[2] István D. Rácz's third book is about English poetry after 1945. He has chosen a title that bears more than one literary connotation. First, as he explains in his Preface (12), it evokes the title of its sister-book, Tamás Bényei's *Az ártatlan ország* [The innocent country],[3] which is a study of the English novel in the same period. Second, the phrase *The Other Country* is borrowed from a significant figure of contemporary poetry, Carol Ann Duffy, whose 1990 collection of poems was published under the same title with the following synopsis on the back cover: "Carol Ann Duffy's third collection takes us to 'the other country'–the places that we visit in fantasy, memory and imagination." Besides, it is also obvious that the