

vation of his suffering compatriots, or of the nation as a whole" (xiv). Contrary to the impression one receives from reading the Introduction, this theme often has a direct relationship to politics and is not always expressed in negative terms in stories about the failure of China's classical philosophies to provide guidance for the country as it enters the modern era or in stories of the alienation and loneliness of youth. Because of this, Hsia neglects the political significance of modern Chinese literature—the manner in which it reflects not only the struggle between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party for control of China, but also the struggle of a whole generation of young writers and intellectuals to enter into meaningful participation in a political process dominated by militarism and violence. Yet if Hsia is guilty of neglect in this area, he can conversely be credited with elevating the study of modern Chinese literature from an overconcern with political questions to a more proper respect for its literary qualities. This is his great achievement and is clearly evident when one reads the Introduction. He has a keen understanding and sensitivity to the literary aspects of this subject, and his comments on individual authors and stories are refreshing.

Certainly, *Modern Chinese Stories and Novellas 1919-1949* is an important addition to the growing body of literature on modern Chinese fiction. The anthology provides readers access to heretofore unavailable writers, to a concise but scholarly bibliography, and to an introduction sensitive to the artistic aspects of modern Chinese literature.

Jack Wills

DAVID BOND

The Temptation of Despair: A Study of the Quebec Novelist André Langevin

Fredericton: York Press, 1982.
Pp. 70. \$9.50.

David Bond's recent book, *The Temptation of Despair: A Study of the Quebec Novelist André Langevin*, is a fine piece of literary criticism,

an important scholarly work on one of Canada's major novelists. Lucid without being simplistic, analytical without being labored, it is a thought-provoking explanation of Langevin's development as a novelist and a thorough and intelligent critique of his five novels. Bond's statements are so logical and well substantiated, his wording so precise, that his arguments remain convincing from beginning to end. This is a book which any Langevin student should find well worth reading.

To write such a book is no easy task, since some of Langevin's novels—*Évadé de la nuit* (1951), *L'Élan d'Amérique* (1972), and to some extent *Une Chaîne dans le parc* (1974)—are generally considered complex. They are certainly more difficult than books by most of the other Quebec novelists who also became famous in the fifties—novelists such as Yves Thériault and Roger Lemelin, for instance. That Langevin's novels are, on the whole, less immediately comprehensible than, say, Thériault's, is hardly surprising when one realizes that Thériault's technique is straightforward and conventional, whereas Langevin's is experimental and (to quote Bond) "circular."

Moreover, although thematically Thériault and Langevin are occasionally on the same frequency (as, for instance, when they focus on the pollution and destruction of the wilderness and the alienation of wilderness-man by an uncaring and uncomprehending civilization) the absurdist, existential dimension so apparent in Langevin's work is not often visible in Thériault's. Langevin, as Bond frequently points out, is a literary heir of Camus, Sartre, and Malraux: "His vision of life is so close to theirs that comparisons are inevitable" (p. 42). Yet despite this similar view of life, Langevin, as Bond shows, stresses at the same time an independence from French literature: "All we share with French writers, and as poor relations, is the language . . . We will discover our resources only here, and not in Paris" (p. 43). This assertion reminds one a good deal of Emerson's historic declaration of American literary independence in "The American Scholar."

Part of the excellence of Bond's work comes from his ability to see Langevin as an evolving part of both the French and Quebec literary traditions. Bond clearly underlines an important part of Langevin's accomplishment when he remarks: "Not the least of Langevin's achievement is to have adapted themes which inspired such writers as Sartre, Camus, and Malraux to a Quebec

setting" (p. 5). In doing this he was "one of the first to create novels which express a new French-Canadian reality" (p. 68). By never losing sight of the dual traditions to which Langevin belongs, Bond's book thus becomes to some extent a comparative study with the added dimensions this term implies.

Still, Bond does not digress to display his obviously impressive knowledge of French and Quebec literature. His focus throughout is clearly on Langevin. Bond gives a detailed and first-rate interpretation of each of Langevin's novels, as well as a very credible and interesting explanation for Langevin's silence of the sixties—a halt in his creative output which has greatly puzzled most critics.

Bond attributes this silence to several things: to the oppressive darkness of Langevin's view of life which obviously made him feel that "literature can do little to alleviate either the great scourge of existence, or the smaller problems of everyday life" (p. 40); and to Langevin's preoccupation during this decade with Quebec's problems—economic, cultural, and linguistic. In any case, as Bond shows very clearly, Langevin was not exactly silent anyway during the sixties. Although he wrote no novels during this period, he did write a great many articles, and, as Bond states, "The articles that he wrote during this time show that he still believed words were not entirely useless. The faith in the power of writing remained with him, and eventually he returned to the novel" (p. 45).

In returning to the novel in the seventies, Langevin adopted the techniques of the *nouveau roman* which, as Bond explains "is largely an evocation of mental reality, and episodes are linked by thematic rather than causal ties, because this is how images are linked in the human mind" (p. 46). Langevin's 1972 novel, *L'Élan d'Amérique*, is, Bond states correctly, "his boldest attempt to use form this way [to underline themes]. It is a complex, difficult novel, but a rewarding one for those who make the effort to unravel its complexities" (p. 46). Bond manages to do just this with the same blend of subtlety and common sense which the reader has learned to count on in the earlier chapters of *The Temptation of Despair*. So it is that, because of the difficulties involved in satisfactorily analyzing *L'Élan d'Amérique*, this chapter most clearly demonstrates Bond's prowess as a critic.

Finally, Bond's ability is demonstrated by the way he never loses sight of the totality of the Langevin vision. As he moves from novel to novel, analyzing its parts, he never loses track of the basic themes which move the novelist throughout his work: the search for a father, life as a prison surrounded by death, the realization that in one's lover one invariably finds a stranger. Langevin's preoccupation with the isolating complexities of human nature, expressed in his first book *Évadé de la nuit* ("An individual is never so simple that another can understand his total essence") extends to his final recognition in *Une Chaîne dans le parc* of a world where there is absolute human solitude—a world where, as Conrad says, "We live, as we dream—alone."

Allison Mitcham

KIM A. HERZINGER

D.H. Lawrence in His Time: 1908-1915.

Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982. Pp. 237.

In this study, Herzinger sets out to place Lawrence within the *cultural* (not historical as the title might lead one to suppose) milieu of his time. An understanding of Lawrence's cultural context, and his responses and reactions to it, he argues, can contribute to a greater appreciation of Lawrence's work. Herzinger examines Lawrence's literary development until 1915 in the light of his contacts with the various cultural groups which dominated English literary life in these years (Edwardians, Georgians, Imagists, "Amygists," Vorticists, Futurists, Cambridge and Bloomsbury). Lawrence's association with any given group was usually quite brief. Typically, his relationships with these groups were characterized by an initial interest and enthusiasm, followed by a period of reaction and doubt, which then turned to disillusion and sometimes even disgust. Each time Lawrence hoped that a group would provide the nucleus of a new and vital way of life, and each time he was bitterly disappointed. (Herzinger thinks, in fact, that Lawrence's belief in the decadence of England was partially the result of his disappointing encounters with these groups.)