

The Small Personal Voice

To say, in 1957, that one believes artists should be committed, is to arouse hostility and distrust because of the quantities of bad novels, pictures, and films produced under the banner of committedness; also because of a current mood of reaction against socialist art-jargon, the words and phrases of which have been debased by a parrot-use by the second-rate to a point where many of us suffer from a nervous reluctance to use them at all. The reaction is so powerful and so prompt that one has only to stand up on a public platform and say that one still believes in the class analysis of society and therefore of art, in short that one is a marxist, for nine-tenths of the audience immediately to assume that one believes novels should be simple tracts about factories or strikes or economic injustice.

I see no reason why good writers should not, if they have a bent that way, write angry protest novels about economic injustice. Many good writers have. Dickens, for instance, was often inspired by poverty and injustice. Novels like *Germinal* or *The Jungle* are not to be despised. A writer's natural talent may drive him to transform what might have been a simple morality-tale into something much more powerful. Or his talent may be adequate only for crude protest. But propagandist literature, reli-

gious or political, is as old as literature itself, and has sometimes been good and sometimes bad.

Recently it has been very bad; and that is why the idea of committedness is in disrepute. But at least it is in debate, and that is a good thing: passionate polemics about art or about anything else are always a sign of health.

Polemics about art now must take into account what has happened in the communist countries where socialist theories of art have been put into practice. The "agonized reappraisals" that are going on everywhere in the socialist movements are a seminal force; for I do not believe that humanity is so compartmented that reappraisals, agonized or not, can go on in one section of it and not quickly and usefully influence anybody who thinks at all.

As a writer I am concerned first of all with novels and stories, though I believe that the arts continuously influence each other, and that what is true of one art in any given epoch is likely to be true of the others. I am concerned that the novel and the story should not decline as art-forms any further than they have from the high peak of literature; that they should possibly regain their greatness. For me the highest point of literature was the novel of the nineteenth century, the work of Tolstoy, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Turgenev, Chekhov; the work of the great realists. I define realism as art which springs so vigorously and naturally from a strongly-held, though not necessarily intellectually-defined, view of life that it absorbs symbolism. I hold the view that the realist novel, the realist story, is the highest form of prose writing; higher than and out of the reach of any comparison with expressionism, impressionism, symbolism, naturalism, or any other ism.

The great men of the nineteenth century had neither religion nor politics nor aesthetic principles in common. But what they did have in common was a climate of

ethical judgement; they shared certain values; they were humanists. A nineteenth-century novel is recognizably a nineteenth-century novel because of this moral climate.

If there is one thing which distinguishes our literature, it is a confusion of standards and the uncertainty of values. It would be hard, now, for a writer to use Balzacian phrases like "sublime virtue" or "monster of wickedness" without self-consciousness. Words, it seems, can no longer be used simply and naturally. All the great words like love, hate; life, death; loyalty, treachery; contain their opposite meanings and half a dozen shades of dubious implication. Words have become so inadequate to express the richness of our experience that the simplest sentence overheard on a bus reverberates like words shouted against a cliff. One certainty we all accept is the condition of being uncertain and insecure. It is hard to make moral judgements, to use words like good and bad.

Yet I reread Tolstoy, Stendhal, Balzac, and the rest of the old giants continuously. So do most of the people I know, people who are left and right, committed and uncommitted, religious and unreligious, but who have at least this in common, that they read novels as I think they should be read, for illumination, in order to enlarge one's perception of life.

Why? Because we are in search of certainties? Because we want a return to a comparatively uncomplicated world? Because it gives us a sense of safety to hear Balzac's thundering verdicts of guilt or innocence, and to explore with Dostoevsky, for instance in *Crime and Punishment*, the possibilities of moral anarchy, only to find order restored at the end with the simplest statements of faith in forgiveness, expiation, redemption?

Recently I finished reading an American novel which pleased me; it was witty, intelligent, un-self-pitying, courageous. Yet when I put it down I knew I would not

reread it. I asked myself why not, what demand I was making on the author that he did not answer. Why was I left dissatisfied with nearly all the contemporary novels I read? Why, if I were reading for my own needs, rather than for the purposes of informing myself about what was going on, would I begin rereading *War and Peace* or *The Red and the Black*?

Put directly, like this, the answer seemed to me clear. I was not looking for a firm reaffirmation of old ethical values, many of which I don't accept; I was not in search of the pleasures of familiarity. I was looking for the warmth, the compassion, the humanity, the love of people which illuminates the literature of the nineteenth century and which makes all these old novels a statement of faith in man himself.

These are qualities which I believe are lacking from literature now.

This is what I mean when I say that literature should be committed. It is these qualities which I demand, and which I believe spring from being committed; for one cannot be committed without belief.

Committed to what? Not to being a propagandist for any political party. I never have thought so. I see no reason why writers should not work, in their role as citizens, for a political party; but they should never allow themselves to feel obliged to publicize any party policy or "line" unless their own private passionate need as writers makes them do so: in which case the passion might, if they have talent enough, make literature of the propaganda.

Once a writer has a feeling of responsibility, as a human being, for the other human beings he influences, it seems to me he must become a humanist, and must feel himself as an instrument of change for good or for bad. That image of the pretty singer in the ivory tower has always

seemed to me a dishonest one. Logically he should be content to sing to his image in the mirror. The act of getting a story or a novel published is an act of communication, an attempt to impose one's personality and beliefs on other people. If a writer accepts this responsibility, he must see himself, to use the socialist phrase, as an architect of the soul, and it is a phrase which none of the old nineteenth-century novelists would have shied away from.

But if one is going to be an architect, one must have a vision to build towards, and that vision must spring from the nature of the world we live in.

We are living at a time which is so dangerous, violent, explosive, and precarious that it is in question whether soon there will be people left alive to write books and to read them. It is a question of life and death for all of us; and we are haunted, all of us, by the threat that even if some madman does not destroy us all, our children may be born deformed or mad. We are living at one of the great turning points of history. In the last two decades man has made an advance as revolutionary as when he first got off his belly and stood upright. Yesterday, we split the atom. We assaulted that colossal citadel of power, the tiny unit of the substance of the universe. And because of this, the great dream and the great nightmare of centuries of human thought have taken flesh and walk beside us all, day and night. Artists are the traditional interpreters of dreams and nightmares, and this is no time to turn our backs on our chosen responsibilities, which is what we should be doing if we refused to share in the deep anxieties, terrors, and hopes of human beings everywhere.

What is the choice before us? It is not merely a question of preventing an evil, but of strengthening a vision of a good which may defeat the evil.

Even before we liberated the power in the atom, so socialist economists claim, the products of our labour (that is, if freed from the artificial restrictions of a strangling economic system) were enough to feed and clothe all the people in the world; humanity could have been freed from want and drudgery if we had taken the brakes off the machines and if so much of the wealth we produced had not been spent on the engines of war. Even before we split the atom, the old dream of man liberated from the tyrannies of hunger and of cold had the solidity of something possible.

But to imagine free man, leisured man, is to step outside what we are. There is no one on this earth who is not twisted by fear and insecurity, and the compromises of thinking made inevitable by want and fear. Those people who see leisured man in terms of football matches and television-watching; those who say: "You can't give man leisure, he won't know how to use it," are as much victims of a temporary phase of economic development as the coupon-fillers and the screen-dreamers. Their imaginations are in bond to their own necessities. Slaves can envy the free; slaves can fight to free their children; but slaves suddenly set free are marked by the habits of submission; and slaves imagining freedom see it through the eyes of slaves.

I am convinced that we all stand at an open door, and that there is a new man about to be born, who has never been twisted by drudgery; a man whose pride as a man will not be measured by his capacity to shoulder work and responsibilities which he detests, which bore him, which are too small for what he could be; a man whose strength will not be gauged by the values of the mystique of suffering.

The imagination of the world already rejects hunger and poverty. We all believe they can be abolished. If

humanity submits to living below the level of what is possible, it will be as shameful as when a human being chooses to live below the level of what he can be; or a nation falls below itself.

There are only two choices: that we force ourselves into the effort of imagination necessary to become what we are capable of being; or that we submit to being ruled by the office boys of big business, or the socialist bureaucrats who have forgotten that socialism means a desire for goodness and compassion—and the end of submission is that we shall blow ourselves up.

It is because it is so hard to think ourselves into the possibilities of the ancient dream of free man that the nightmare is so strong. Everyone in the world now, has moments when he throws down a newspaper, turns off the radio, shuts his ears to the man on the platform, and holds out his hand and looks at it, shaken with terror. The hand of a white man, held to the warmth of a northern indoor fire; the hand of a black man, held into the strong heat of the sun: we look at our working hands, brown and white, and then at the flat surface of a wall, the cold material of a city pavement, at breathing soil, trees, flowers, growing corn. We think: the tiny units of the matter of my hand, my flesh, are shared with walls, tables, pavements, trees, flowers, soil . . . and suddenly, and at any moment, a madman may throw a switch, and flesh and soil and leaves may begin to dance together in a flame of destruction. We are all of us made kin with each other and with everything in the world because of the kinship of possible destruction. And the history of the last fifty years does not help us to disbelieve in the possibility of a madman in a position of power. We are haunted by the image of an idiot hand, pressing down a great black lever; or a thumb pressing a button, as the dance of fiery death begins in one country and spreads

over the earth; and above the hand the concentrated fanatic stare of a mad sick face.

Even the vision of the madman is not so bad. We are all of us, at times, this madman. Most of us have said, at some time or another, exhausted with the pressure of living, "Oh for God's sake, press the button, turn down the switch, we've all had enough." Because we can understand the madman, since he is part of us, we can deal with him, he is not so frightening as that other image: of a young empty-faced technician in anonymous overalls, saying, "Yes sir!" and pressing the button. The anonymous technician, one of the growing army manning the departments of death, has no responsibility. He might turn the switch looking over his shoulder for confirmation at the Chairman of the Committee who ordered him to do it. And the Committee to another Committee. And the Chairman of that final superior Committee, one of those little half-men that we see on the newsreels, with their self-consciously democratic faces—that Chairman will say: "I represent the people." And the people is the brown man sitting under a tree, holding out the flesh of his forearm to the heat of the sun, thinking that the warmth of the great sun is the warmth also of that final blast of heat; the people is me.

Now, in March 1957, the British Government decides to continue the hydrogen bomb tests which threaten unborn children. Yet of the men who took the decision I am sure there is not one who says: Because of me thousands of children will be born crippled, blind, deaf, mad. They are members of a committee. They have no responsibility as individuals. They represent me. But I repudiate their act. I don't know one person, have never known a person, who would agree, as an individual, to throw that particular switch which will make children be born monsters. We all know there is a terrible gap

between the public and the private conscience, and that until we bridge it we will never be safe from the murderous madman or the anonymous technician. But what is the nature of that gap? Partly, I think, it is that we have been so preoccupied with death and fear that we have not tried to imagine what living might be without the pressure of suffering. And the artists have been so busy with the nightmare they have had no time to rewrite the old utopias. All our nobilities are those of the victories over suffering. We are soaked in the grandeur of suffering; and can imagine happiness only as the yawn of a suburban Sunday afternoon.

Yet there have been attempts enough to fill the gap. The literary products of the socialist third of the world can scarcely be said to lack optimism. Anyone who has studied them is familiar with that jolly, jaunty, curiously unemotional novel about the collective farm, the factory, the five-year plan, which is reminiscent of nothing so much as of a little boy whistling in the dark. The simple demand for simple statements of faith produces art so intolerably dull and false that one reads it yawning and returns to Tolstoy.

Meanwhile, the best and most vital works of Western literature have been despairing statements of emotional anarchy. If the typical product of communist literature during the last two decades is the cheerful little tract about economic advance, then the type of Western literature is the novel or play which one sees or reads with a shudder of horrified pity for all of humanity. If writers like Camus, Sartre, Genet, Beckett, feel anything but a tired pity for human beings, then it is not evident from their work.

I believe that the pleasurable luxury of despair, the acceptance of disgust, is as much a betrayal of what a writer should be as the acceptance of the simple economic

view of man; both are aspects of cowardice, both fallings-away from a central vision, the two easy escapes of our time into false innocence. They are the opposite sides of the same coin. One sees man as the isolated individual unable to communicate, helpless and solitary; the other as collective man with a collective conscience. Somewhere between these two, I believe, is a resting point, a place of decision, hard to reach and precariously balanced. It is a balance which must be continuously tested and reaffirmed. Living in the midst of this whirlwind of change, it is impossible to make final judgements or absolute statements of value. The point of rest should be the writer's recognition of man, the responsible individual, voluntarily submitting his will to the collective, but never finally; and insisting on making his own personal and private judgements before every act of submission.

I think that a writer who has for many years been emotionally involved in the basic ethical conflict of communism—what is due to the collective and what to the individual conscience—is peculiarly equipped to write of the dangers inherent in being “committed.” The writer who can be bludgeoned into silence by fear or economic pressure is not worth considering; these problems are simple and the dangers easily recognizable. What is dangerous is the inner loyalty to something felt as something much greater than one's self. I remember, in Moscow, when this question was discussed, a writer replied to an accusation of being bludgeoned by the Party into false writing by saying: “No one bludgeons us. Our conscience is at the service of the people. We develop an inner censor.” It is the inner censor which is the enemy.

This same attitude was expressed at a higher level during another conversation I had with one of the well-known Soviet writers some months before the Twentieth Congress. He had been telling me about his experiences

during the thirties. Because he had refused to inform on some of his colleagues he had suffered two years of what amounted to social ostracism. He was not a communist but he had a deep emotional loyalty to the communist ideals. I asked him if he had written about his experiences, saying that, since Sholokov, there had been many interesting small books produced in Soviet literature, but none describing the great conflict between good and evil which was still being played out in his country. I said I could understand that such books could not be published now, but there would come a time when they would be published. He replied: “How could I write of that? It was too painful, too difficult to know what was wrong and what was right.” I said that if the people like himself remained silent about this struggle, the literature of his country would be impoverished. He said: “To write of such suffering, to write of such pain, would need an objectivity proper only to a second-rate writer. A great writer has a warmth of heart which commits him to the deepest pain and suffering of his people. But to step back from that experience far enough to write about it would mean a coldness of heart.” I said that what he was saying amounted to a new theory of art. To which he replied: “Art can look after itself. Art will always recreate itself in different forms. But there are times when humanity is so pitiful and so exposed that art should be willing to stand aside and wait. Art is arrogant unless it is prepared to stand aside.”

This sums up for me, and where I feel it most deeply and personally, the point where “committedness” can sell out to expediency. Once you admit that “art should be willing to stand aside for life,” then the little tracts about progress, the false optimism, the dreadful lifeless products of socialist realism, become inevitable.

People who have been influenced by, or who have lived

inside, the communist ethos, will understand the complicated emotions, the difficult loyalties, behind what that Soviet writer said. For me it is depressing that the younger people now have no understanding of it. This is the real gap between people of my age and to choose a point at random, people under thirty. Rejecting "propaganda," for this is what they believe they are doing, they reject an imaginative understanding of what I am convinced is the basic conflict of our time. The mental climate created by the cold war has produced a generation of young intellectuals who totally reject everything communism stands for; they cut themselves off imaginatively from a third of mankind, and impoverish themselves by doing so.

It is this conflict which I am trying to explore in my series of novels, "Children of Violence," two volumes of which have appeared. Not one critic has understood what I should have thought would be obvious from the first chapter, where I was at pains to state the theme very clearly: that this is a study of the individual conscience in its relations with the collective. The fact that no critic has seen this does not, of course, surprise me. As long as critics are as "sensitive," subjective, and uncommitted to anything but their own private sensibilities, there will be no body of criticism worth taking seriously in this country. At the moment our critics remind me of a lot of Victorian ladies making out their library lists: this is a "nice" book; or it is not a "nice" book; the characters are "nice"; or they are not "nice."

What we need more than anything else, I am convinced, is some serious criticism. The most exciting periods of literature have always been those when the critics were great.

We are not living in an exciting literary period but in

a dull one. We are not producing masterpieces, but large numbers of small, quite lively, intelligent novels. Above all, current British literature is provincial. This in spite of the emergence of the Angry Young Men. I use the phrase not because I think it is in any way an adequate description but because it is immediately recognizable.

When as a socialist I look forward to the working class being emancipated into readers and writers of serious literature, it is not because I believe books "about" workers are better than books by or about middle-class people. I make a point of saying this because it is assumed that this is what socialists believe. It is because when a hitherto inarticulate class is released into speech, it brings a fresh rush of vitality into literature. This is why the work of the Angry Young Men was like an injection of vitality into the withered arm of British literature. It expresses something new; a section of the intelligentsia who are scornful of middle-class values; reject The Establishment; are refreshingly derisive and are not prepared to be bullied by phrases like "good taste." Yet they are extremely provincial and I do not mean by provincial that they come from or write about the provinces. I mean that their horizons are bounded by their immediate experience of British life and standards.

As an example there is John Braine's book *Room at the Top*, which was compared with Stendhal's work. This comparison exactly pinpoints what I mean. Stendhal's bitterly opportunist heroes sought their various destinies in the painful twilight of the reaction that followed the French Revolution. The grandeur of Stendhal's vision comes precisely from his bitter knowledge of the pettiness of life after a great vision had failed. But the hero of *Room at the Top*, whose values are similar to Stendhal's heroes, who understand, as clearly as Julien Sorel when

he is allowing himself to be corrupted, does not see himself in relation to any larger vision. Therefore he remains petty.

It seems to me that the work of all the new younger writers is essentially a protest against the pettiness and narrowness of what is offered them. From Jimmy Porter to Lucky Jim they are saying: "I am too good for what I am offered." And so they are.

British life is at the moment petty and frustrating. The people in these islands are kindly, pleasant, tolerant; apparently content to sink into ever-greater depths of genteel poverty because of the insistence of our rulers on spending so much of the wealth we produce on preparations for a war against communism; a war which will take place if and when the United States decides. They are a people who have lost the habit of fighting back; they will emigrate, but they won't rebel, or at least, not about fundamentals. If there is industrial strife, even socialist newspapers behave like anxious maiden aunts, exhorting both sides to play the game and not to step outside the rules of fair play. For the workers are striking because their standard of living is fluctuating, not because a fifth of the products of their work is being spent on armaments which almost at once become obsolete; not because this is a rich country being artificially kept poor. If there is a disciplinary war against a dissident colony, the young men obediently march off, because they have been educated not to think, or because war experience is likely to be the only exciting and interesting experience they can look forward to. The working people get their view of life through a screen of high-pressure advertising; sex-sodden newspapers and debased films and television; the middle classes, from a press which from *The Times* to the *New Statesman* is debilitated by a habit of languid conformity which is attacking Britain like dry rot.

It is a country so profoundly parochial that people like myself coming in from outside, never cease to marvel. Do the British people know that all over what is politely referred to as the Commonwealth, millions of people continually discuss and speculate about their probable reactions to this or that event? No, and if they did, they would not care. I remember being in the House of Commons one afternoon when some Colonial issue was being discussed. There were more Africans in the Strangers' Gallery than there were Members of Parliament who thought the matter important enough to take their seats in the House. Does the Labour movement understand that hundreds of thousands of the more intelligent people in the Colonies, people whose awakening has very often been fed by the generous age of British literature—poets like Shelley and Byron and Burns, writers like Dickens—look to them for help and guidance? For the most part, socialists are not very interested in what is going on in the Colonies. To discuss politics in Britain with most people means that in five minutes one is astounded to find that the talk is of whether old Freddie or Tony is going to be sent out to govern New South Wales, or whether brother John or Jack will be the next secretary of the Trade Union.

Thinking internationally means choosing a particular shade of half-envious, half-patronizing emotion to feel about the United States; or collecting money for Hungary, or taking little holidays in Europe, or liking French or Italian films.

Meanwhile the world churns, bubbles, and ferments.

All over that enormous land mass, the Soviet Union and China, the most epic movement of change ever known in history is taking place. It is the greatest event of our time, and one in which we are all involved. But, to quote a young intellectual aged about twenty-five: "All

that sort of thing, my dear, is really rather *vieux jeu*, isn't it? I mean to say, progress and all that is rather old hat."

And the most exciting and interesting writers we are producing in this country, for all their vitality, are sunk inside the parochialism.

Mr. Amis, for instance, who says he envies writers who have a cause to inspire them: Colonial freedom, for instance. This is the Victorian charitable view; the poor are always with us, suitable objects for uplifting emotions. For apparently Mr. Amis, although a Welshman, does not see Britain in intimate relation and interaction with other countries. Mr. Amis also says that self-interest is the only authentic political motive. Without going into the psychological analysis of motives, which always cuts too many ways to be useful, the fact is that everywhere in the world people with nothing to gain from being socialists (nothing to gain in the sense that Mr. Amis uses) have become, are becoming, and will become, socialists of one kind or another. Most of the people I have known during the past fifteen years have devoted themselves to causes against their self-interest. Britain has been supremely a country which fed people into various crusading movements, either at home or abroad, people with nothing to gain but the maintenance of their self-respect. Mr. Amis is generalizing from an emotion which is current among a section of his generation now. It is a temporary mood of disillusion.

There is Mr. Colin Wilson, who sees no reason why he should not state that: "Like all my generation I am anti-humanist and anti-materialist." Mr. Wilson has every right to be anti-humanist and anti-materialist; but it is a sign of his invincible British provincialism that he should claim to speak for his generation. The fact is that outside the very small sub-class of humanity Mr. Wilson belongs to, vast numbers of young people are both humanist and

materialist. Millions of young people in China, the Soviet Union, and India, for instance. And the passions that excite the young African nationalist, five years literate, watching the progress of dams being built in India and China, because he knows that what goes on in other countries intimately affects himself, have little in common with the passions of Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson may find the desire of backward people not to starve, not to remain illiterate, rather uninteresting, but he and people like him should at least try and understand it exists, and what a great and creative force it is, one which will affect us all.

Then there is Mr. Osborne, whose work, if I understand it rightly, is a passionate protest against littleness. There are no great causes left to fight for. Jimmy Porter is doomed to futility because he was born too late for the French Revolution. Admittedly Stendhal exclaimed: "Happy the heroes who died before 1804," but that was quite a long time ago. But because other people have done the fighting for Jimmy Porter in the thirties and the forties, there is nothing for it but to stagnate and submit to being sucked dry by women. I think I quote more or less correctly.

But when it reaches the point where we are offered the sex war as a serious substitute for social struggle, even if ironically, then it is time to examine the reasons. That there are no pure causes left? True; but occasions as simply and obviously just as the Storming of the Bastille don't often occur in history. And in the thirties a good deal of passion went into causes complicated by the split in the socialist movement; and in the forties people were prepared to die in order to defend the bad against the worse.

The other day I met a girl who said she envied me because I had had at least ten years of being able to believe in the purity of communism, which advantage was

denied to her generation. All of us, she said, were living off the accumulated fat of the socialist hump. She was a socialist herself, but without any enthusiasm.

But what is this socialist hump it seems that we, the middle-aged, are living off? Somebody once said that there was nothing more arrogant than to demand a perfect cause to identify oneself with. It is true that when I became a communist, emotionally if not organizationally, in 1942, my picture of socialism as developed in the Soviet Union was, to say the least, inaccurate. But after fifteen years of uncomfortable adjustment to reality I still find myself in the possession of an optimism about the future obviously considered jejune by anyone under the age of thirty. (In Britain, that is.) Perhaps it is that the result of having been a communist is to be a humanist.

For a while I imagined that the key to this disillusionment might be found by comparing our time with the disillusionment which followed the French Revolution. To this end I reread Stendhal. "Injustice and absurdity still made him angry in spite of himself, and he was still angrier at being so, and at taking an interest in that absurd and rascally mob which forms the immense majority of mankind." "It is the party spirit," replied Altamira. "There are no longer any genuine passions in the nineteenth century; that is why people are so bored in France. We commit the greatest cruelties, but without cruelty." Such remarks seem contemporary enough.

Yet we are all of us, directly or indirectly, caught up in a great whirlwind of change; and I believe that if an artist has once felt this, in himself, and felt himself as part of it; if he has once made the effort of imagination necessary to comprehend it, it is an end of despair, and the aridity of self-pity. It is the beginning of something else which I think is the minimum act of humility for a writer: to know that one is a writer at all because one

represents, makes articulate, is continuously and invisibly fed by, numbers of people who are inarticulate, to whom one belongs, to whom one is responsible.

Because this is not a great age of literature it is easy to fall into despondency and frustration. For a time I was depressed because I thought it likely that the novel might very well be on the way out altogether. It was, after all, born with the middle class, and might die with the middle class. A hundred years ago people used to wait impatiently for the next instalment of a novel. Cinema and television have been added to the popular arts, where once the novel was alone.

But the novelist has one advantage denied to any of the other artists. The novel is the only popular art-form left where the artist speaks directly, in clear words, to his audience. Film-makers, playwrights, television writers, have to reach people through a barrier of financiers, actors, producers, directors. The novelist talks, as an individual to individuals, in a small personal voice. In an age of committee art, public art, people may begin to feel again a need for the small personal voice; and this will feed confidence into writers and, with confidence because of the knowledge of being needed, the warmth and humanity and love of people which is essential for a great age of literature.

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