

expressing the truth through the imperfect medium of language at the expense of his despair of knowing the truth. He is circumspect when tracing similarities between Kafka's thoughts and Jewish mysticism, though he assumes that he was indebted to a knowledge of the mystics. If Hoffmann errs in finding too much belief amid Kafka's uncertainties, he goes far to correct the picture, current since Existentialism, of the writer as an atheist. His general conclusions are valuable and more cautious than some of his more detailed points. He sums up by saying that Kafka would have liked to share the faith of the mystics. Apparently Hoffmann is not aware that the same conclusion was reached over twenty years ago in one of the earliest analyses of Kafka's work (H. S. Reiss, *Franz Kafka. Eine Betrachtung seines Werkes* [Heidelberg: Schneider, 1952]).

Amann's knowledge of the corpus of Kafka criticism seems equally restricted—yet he attempts to draw a complete picture of Kafka the artist. He concentrates on his personality as seen in his relationship to the women he loved and to his vocation as a writer. He uses Kafka's images, develops the metaphors, interrelates them, revelling like Kafka in their mutability, but unlike him seemingly unaware that images are at least one step away from the truth, that conciseness is a virtue, and that the ability to manipulate language does not compensate for weakness in logic. If he had not been preceded by Politzer and Canetti, and were not surpassed in clarity by both, and if he had felt obliged to consult Sokel and Thorlby, Amann's book might have been worth reading for its content. He makes a devil of Kafka by arguing that he deliberately or at least half consciously manipulated his love affairs so that the women suffered and he retained his independence. He makes a hero of him by interpreting his failures as triumphs, all in the name of a religion of art and a concept of morbid genius that Kafka himself refused to glorify. Despite the warnings of Max Brod, he believes every word of Kafka's self-recriminations; his analysis of the psychology of the artist is also distorted by the assumption that all great artists are pathological cases. His thesis that Kafka's writings tell us nothing about anything except the author's unique personality is at best questionable.

J. L. Hibberd

OTTAVIO CECCHI, CESARE GARBOLI, GIAN CARLO ROSCIONI, EDS.

*Scritti Letterari di Niccolò Gallo*

Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1975, Pp. 184. L. 5,500.

Four years after his death, Niccolò Gallo can more properly be judged in his work as a literary critic through this selected collection of essays and letters. His friends, who edited the volume, besides honoring a great man of letters, felt the need to present a literary document which would enable people to understand and evaluate developments in the field of Italian literature from 1945 to the present. Gallo's activity as literary critic and editor goes back to 1942 but on the world literary scene he is perhaps better remembered for the translation into Italian of Doctor Zhivago (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1958). With this work he acquainted the western world with a masterpiece destined to gain international acclaim. Italian readers are also indebted to him for the translation with an introduction of Jacques Rivière's *Aimée* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1959) and, in collaboration with Maria Ortiz, for the translation of Albert Thibaudet's *Gustave Flaubert*.

Niccolò Gallo was a director of the series "Il Castelletto" from 1955 to 1956 (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi). From 1959 on, he directed the series "Narratori Italiani" for Mondadori of Milan. While working in these capacities he built up the reputations of such outstanding contemporary Italian novelists as Cassola, Bassani, Bigiaretti, Dessì, and Delfini. His editing (with Giansiro Ferrata) of the first two volumes of *2000 pagine di Gramsci: Nel tempo della lotta (1914-1926)* and of the same author's *Lettere edite ed inedite (1912-1937)* has added considerably to the study and appreciation of this Italian politician and philosopher, a victim of Fascism, whose writings are fundamental for an understanding of new trends in Italian post second world war literary criticism. Gallo, who was himself an active fighter in the Resistance movement against Fascism and a member of the Italian Communist party, hoped that literature in Italy would take a completely new stand after 1945 and become more committed to society. According to the editors of *Scritti letterari*, the major

themes of Italian literature between 1940-1950 such as life, politics, and society were in great part a source of personal disappointment for Gallo because of the detached way in which writers, critics, and essayists had dealt with them.

It is in the articles on Italian post-war fiction that scholars and students of this genre will find the most challenging comments. The writers of the neo-realistic movement, although deeply involved in the partisan warfare for the liberation of Italy, generally failed to produce a fully committed literature; this was partly due to the impossibility of adapting a highly literary lexicon, like Italian, to everyday life.

The only valuable exceptions are the short accounts (*cronache diaristiche*) of Corrado Alvaro, in a crude and simple language Natalie Ginsburg, Primo Levi, and a few others who were able to represent the new moral and social values, achieved through the struggle for independence. Gallo sees Carlo Levi's *Cristo s'è fermato a Eboli*, hailed since its first publication in 1945 as a masterpiece of neo-realism, as a work standing between the ethical and political essay on the one hand and the fiction of involvement on the other. The problems of Southern Italy which constitute the main topic of the novel fail to receive a thorough analysis since the superstitions and the myths of the peasant world are treated simply according to the literary imagination of its author.

Gallo examines at some depth the early works of Vittorini and Pavese, usually considered the initiators of neorealism. Vittorini's *Uomini e no* is seen, on account of its Resistance background, as a continuation of *Conversazione in Sicilia*. Its lyrical intuitions and the musical rhythm of its prose place this work in a world of literary enchantment from which, according to Gallo, Vittorini will never be able to detach himself as a writer. He finds Pavese technically perfect in the development of his stories and novels; they contain a vision of the world which is a reflection of the author's effort to establish in his intellectual personages a relationship between their active participation in social and political life and their individual conscience. This attempt carries them further down into a hopeless solitude which is more and more the reflection of Pavese's own as a

writer and as a man. It is particularly significant that precisely in 1950, the year of this comment, Pavese ended his troubled existence by committing suicide.

Ignazio Silone, very seldom included among the great Italian contemporary writers by Italian critics, is here briefly remembered as an outstanding neorealist, although his formation as a writer took place abroad in the thirties, as an exile outlawed by the Fascist party. Vasco Pratolini and Italo Calvino, two writers of a younger generation, receive Gallo's acclaim: the first one for his motion picture technique in depicting the street life of his native Florence; the second one for his skill in enveloping his Resistance stories with a fable like atmosphere. In an effort to relate the long span of Moravia's literary production to his times, Gallo returns often to *Alberto Moravia*, perhaps the most read writer of the Italian bourgeoisie. He focuses on Moravia's treatment of lower class people in his Roman stories to point out that the author skillfully takes advantage of neorealist themes but changes them into allegorizing interpretations.

Particularly useful for an insight into Gallo's human side are the letters reproduced in the final part. Most of these were written to the poet Vittorio Sereni who served with him on a publishing committee for Mondadori. His suggestions for the improvement of manuscripts are the most valid examples of the depth of his knowledge. *Scritti letterari* is an excellent, well-edited collection of writings, and it is essential for an understanding of the literary period which followed the second world war.

Maddalena Kuitunen

RICHARD CHRIST and  
MANFRED WOLTER, ED.  
*Fünzig Erzähler aus der DDR*  
Berlin: Aufbau, 1974. Pp. M 12.00.

*Fünzig Erzähler aus der DDR* (Fifty Storytellers from the GDR) is a collection of fifty stories by fifty East-German writers. The fact that these stories have been published once before, and that they are shorter than thirty pages (with only