

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC

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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series

When you need to review criticism of literary works, these are the Gale series to use:

If the author's death date is:	You should turn to:
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1900 through 1959	TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM for example: Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, Mark Twain, Virginia Woolf
1800 through 1899	NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE CRITICISM for example: Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Sand, William Wordsworth
1400 through 1799	LITERATURE CRITICISM FROM 1400 TO 1800 <i>(excluding Shakespeare)</i> for example: Anne Bradstreet, Alexander Pope, François Rabelais, Phillis Wheatley
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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Excerpts from Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1960,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**

**Dennis Poupard
Editor**

**Marie Lazzari
Thomas Ligotti
Associate Editors**



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Preface

It is impossible to overvalue the importance of literature in the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual evolution of humanity. Literature is that which both lifts us out of everyday life and helps us to better understand it. Through the fictive lives of such characters as Anna Karenina, Jay Gatsby, or Leopold Bloom, our perceptions of the human condition are enlarged, and we are enriched.

Literary criticism can also give us insight into the human condition, as well as into the specific moral and intellectual atmosphere of an era, for the criteria by which a work of art is judged reflects contemporary philosophical and social attitudes. Literary criticism takes many forms: the traditional essay, the book or play review, even the parodic poem. Criticism can also be of several types: normative, descriptive, interpretive, textual, appreciative, generic. Collectively, the range of critical response helps us to understand a work of art, an author, an era.

Scope of the Series

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC) is designed to serve as an introduction for the student of twentieth-century literature to the authors of the period 1900 to 1960 and to the most significant commentators on these authors. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are by far the most popular writers for study in high school and college literature courses. Since a vast amount of relevant critical material confronts the student, *TCLC* presents significant passages from the most important published criticism to aid students in the location and selection of commentaries on authors who died between 1900 and 1960.

The need for *TCLC* was suggested by the usefulness of the Gale series *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)*, which excerpts criticism on current writing. Because of the difference in time span under consideration (*CLC* considers authors who were still living after 1959), there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*. For further information about *CLC* and Gale's other criticism series, users should consult the Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series preceding the title page in this volume.

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully compiled to include authors who represent a variety of genres and nationalities and who are currently regarded as the most important writers of this era. In addition to major authors, *TCLC* also presents criticism on lesser-known writers whose significant contributions to literary history are important to the study of twentieth-century literature.

Each author entry in *TCLC* is intended to provide an overview of major criticism on an author. Therefore, the editors include fifteen to twenty authors in each 600-page volume (compared with approximately fifty authors in a *CLC* volume of similar size) so that more attention may be given to an author. Each author entry represents a historical survey of the critical response to that author's work: some early criticism is presented to indicate initial reactions, later criticism is selected to represent any rise or decline in the author's reputation, and current retrospective analyses provide students with a modern view. The length of an author entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English, and from foreign criticism in translation. Critical articles and books that have not been translated into English are excluded. Every attempt has been made to identify and include excerpts from the seminal essays on each author's work.

An author may appear more than once in the series because of the great quantity of critical material available, or because of a resurgence of criticism generated by events such as an author's centennial or anniversary celebration, the republication or posthumous publication of an author's works, or the publication of a newly translated work. Generally, a few author entries in each volume of *TCLC* feature criticism on single works by major authors who have appeared previously in the series. Only those individual works that have been the subjects of vast amounts of criticism and are widely studied in literature classes are selected for this in-depth treatment. Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*) and Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* are examples of such entries in *TCLC*, Volume 21.

Organization of the Book

An author entry consists of the following elements: author heading, biographical and critical introduction, principal works, excerpts of criticism (each followed by a bibliographical citation), and an additional bibliography for further reading.

- The *author heading* consists of the author's full name, followed by birth and death dates. The unbracketed portion of the name denotes the form under which the author most commonly wrote. If an author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located at the beginning of the introduction to the author entry are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertainty as to a birth or death date is indicated by a question mark.
- The *biographical and critical introduction* contains background information designed to introduce the reader to an author and to the critical debate surrounding his or her work. Parenthetical material following many of the introductions provides references to biographical and critical reference series published by Gale, including *Children's Literature Review*, *Contemporary Authors*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Something about the Author*, and past volumes of *TCLC*.
- Most *TCLC* entries include *portraits* of the author. Many entries also contain illustrations of materials pertinent to an author's career, including holographs of manuscript pages, title pages, dust jackets, letters, or representations of important people, places, and events in an author's life.
- The *list of principal works* is chronological by date of first book publication and identifies the genre of each work. In the case of foreign authors where there are both foreign language publications and English translations, the title and date of the first English-language edition are given in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.
- *Criticism* is arranged chronologically in each author entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over the years. All titles by the author featured in the critical entry are printed in boldface type to enable the user to ascertain without difficulty the works being discussed. Also for purposes of easier identification, the critic's name and the publication date of the essay are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the journal in which it appeared. When an anonymous essay is later attributed to a critic, the critic's name appears in brackets at the beginning of the excerpt and in the bibliographical citation. Many critical entries in *TCLC* also contain translated material to aid users. Unless otherwise noted, translations within brackets are by the editors; translations within parentheses are by the author of the excerpt.
- Critical essays are prefaced by *explanatory notes* as an additional aid to students using *TCLC*. The explanatory notes provide several types of useful information, including: the reputation of a critic; the importance of a work of criticism; the specific type of criticism (biographical, psychoanalytic, structuralist, etc.); a synopsis of the criticism; and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author's work. In many cases, these notes cross-reference the work of critics who agree or disagree with each other. Dates in parentheses within the explanatory notes refer to a book publication date when they follow a book title and to an essay date when they follow a critic's name.
- A complete *bibliographical citation* designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book by the interested reader follows each piece of criticism. An asterisk (*) at the end of a citation indicates that the essay is on more than one author.
- The *additional bibliography* appearing at the end of each author entry suggests further reading on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights. An asterisk (*) at the end of a citation indicates that the essay is on more than one author.

An appendix lists the sources from which material in each volume has been reprinted. It does not, however, list every book or periodical consulted in the preparation of the volume.

Cumulative Indexes

Each volume of *TCLC* includes a cumulative index to authors listing all the authors who have appeared in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, and *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, along with cross-references to the Gale series *Children's Literature Review*, *Authors in the News*, *Contemporary Authors*, *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Something about the Author*, *Something about the Author Autobiography Series*, and *Yesterday's Authors of Books for Children*. Users will welcome this cumulated author index as a useful tool for locating an author within the various series. The index, which lists birth and death dates when available, will be particularly valuable for those authors who are identified with a certain period but whose death date causes them to be placed in another, or for those authors whose careers span two periods. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald is found in *TCLC*, yet a writer often associated with him, Ernest Hemingway, is found in *CLC*.

Each volume of *TCLC* also includes a cumulative nationality index. Author names are arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities and followed by the volume numbers in which they appear.

A cumulative index to critics is another useful feature in *TCLC*. Under each critic's name are listed the authors on whom the critic has written and the volume and page where the criticism may be found.

Acknowledgments

No work of this scope can be accomplished without the cooperation of many people. The editors especially wish to thank the copyright holders of the excerpted criticism included in this volume, the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reprint rights, and Anthony Bogucki for assistance with copyright research. We are also grateful to the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Congress, University of Detroit Library, University of Michigan Library, and Wayne State University Library for making their resources available to us.

Suggestions Are Welcome

In response to various suggestions, several features have been added to *TCLC* since the series began, including: explanatory notes to excerpted criticism that provide important information regarding critics and their work; a cumulative author index listing authors in all Gale literary criticism series; entries devoted to criticism on a single work by a major author; and more extensive illustrations.

Readers who wish to suggest authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to write the editors.

Authors to Be Featured in *TCLC*, Volumes 22 and 23

Sherwood Anderson (American short story writer and novelist)—Among the most original and influential writers in early twentieth-century American literature, Anderson is the author of brooding, introspective works that explore the effects of the unconscious upon human life. Anderson's "hunger to see beneath the surface of lives" was best expressed in the short stories comprising *Winesburg, Ohio: A Group of Tales of Ohio Small Town Life*. *TCLC* will devote an entire entry to critical discussion of this work.

Henri Bergson (French philosopher)—One of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, Bergson is renowned for his opposition to the dominant materialist thought of his time and for his creation of theories that emphasize the supremacy and independence of supra-rational consciousness.

Edgar Rice Burroughs (American novelist)—Burroughs was a science fiction writer who is best known as the creator of Tarzan. His *Tarzan of the Apes* and its numerous sequels have sold over thirty-five million copies in fifty-six languages, making Burroughs one of the most popular authors in the world.

Joseph Conrad (Polish-born English novelist)—Considered an innovator of novel structure as well as one of the finest stylists of modern English literature, Conrad is the author of complex novels that examine the ambiguity of good and evil. *TCLC* will devote an entry to critical discussion of his *Nostromo*, a novel exploring Conrad's conviction that failure is a fact of human existence and that every ideal contains the possibilities for its own corruption.

Robert Desnos (French poet)—Desnos was one of the original members of the Surrealist movement and one of the most adept at its experimental techniques. Although he later broke with the group to explore more conventional literary forms, he is remembered as the poet whose work best realized the Surrealists' theoretical precepts.

Grazia Deledda (Italian novelist and short story writer)—Deledda was the second woman to win a Nobel Prize in literature, which she was awarded in 1926 for her naturalistic novels of passion and tragedy set in her native Sardinia.

Frank Harris (Welsh editor, critic, and biographer)—Prominent in English literary circles at the turn of the century, Harris was a flamboyant man of letters described by one critic as "seemingly offensive on principle." His greatest accomplishments—which were achieved as editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Evening News*, and the *Saturday Review*—have been overshadowed by his scandalous life, his sensational biographical portraits of such contemporaries as Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, and his massive autobiography, which portrays Edwardian life primarily as a background for Harris's near-Olympian sexual adventures.

Henry James (American novelist)—James is considered one of the most important novelists of the English language and his work is universally acclaimed for its stylistic distinction, complex psychological portraits, and originality of theme and technique. *TCLC* will devote an entire entry to critical discussion of his novella *The Turn of the Screw*, which is considered one of the most interesting and complex short novels in world literature.

Jerome K. Jerome (English novelist and dramatist)—Jerome was the author of humorous fiction and some of the most popular plays of the Edwardian era.

Sarah Orne Jewett (American novelist and short story writer)—One of the foremost American writers of regionalist fiction, Jewett is known for her sympathetic depiction of the characters and customs of nineteenth-century rural Maine.

Vladimir Korolenko (Russian short story writer and journalist)—Best known as a journalist and activist for social justice, Korolenko was also the author of fiction reflecting his sympathy for the outcasts of Russian society and his faith in human nature.

Alfred Kubin (Austrian novelist)—Known primarily as a graphic artist, Kubin is also the author of *The Other Side*, a fantastic novel that has been cited as an influence on Franz Kafka's *The Castle* and on the literary movements of Surrealism, Expressionism, and the Theater of the Absurd.

Sinclair Lewis (American novelist)—A prominent American novelist of the 1920s, Lewis is considered the author of some of the most effective satires in American literature. In his most important novels, which include *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, and *Arrowsmith*, he attacked the dullness, smug provincialism, and socially enforced conformity of the American middle class. *TCLC* will devote an entire entry to critical discussion of *Main Street*.

Dmitri Merezhkovsky (Russian novelist, philosopher, poet, and critic)—Although his poetry and criticism are credited with initiating the Symbolist movement in Russian literature, Merezhkovsky is best known as a religious philosopher who sought in numerous essays and historical novels to reconcile the values of pagan religions with the teachings of Christ.

Thomas Mofolo (Lesothan novelist)—Considered the first great writer in modern African literature, Mofolo is the author of novels depicting the radical effect of Christian teachings on traditional African society. His most highly regarded novel, *Chaka*, was suppressed at the time of its completion by missionary publishers who objected to the book's favorable portrayal of traditional African customs and beliefs; however, since its publication, the work has gained a reputation as an epic tragedy of both literary and historical significance.

Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall (American novelists, historians, and essayists)—Nordhoff and Hall collaborated on the novels *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Men against the Sea*, and *Pitcairn's Island*, a trilogy comprising one of the most compelling and widely read maritime narratives in popular fiction.

Giovanni Papini (Italian essayist, journalist, and editor)—Papini was a man of letters whose work as an editor, journalist, and essayist was instrumental in shaping Italian social and cultural thought during the early years of the twentieth century.

Boris Pilnyak (Russian novelist and short story writer)—Pilnyak's *Naked Year* was the first important novel to depict the effect of the Bolshevik Revolution on Russian society. His energetic, episodic, and stylistically heterogeneous narratives were widely imitated by postrevolutionary writers, making Pilnyak one of the most influential Soviet literary figures of the 1920s.

Kenneth Roberts (American novelist)—Roberts's works, many of which are set in New England during the American Revolution, are considered among the best historical novels in American literature.

Romain Rolland (French novelist, biographer, and dramatist)—Rolland was a prominent man of letters and noted pacifist who is best known for his novel *Jean-Christophe*, a ten-volume life of a musical genius in which the author propounded his antinationalist and antimaterialist views. A distinguished musicologist and critic, Rolland also wrote many dramas that demonstrate his theory of a "theater of the people" devoted to the inspirationally heroic and to social change.

Oswald Spengler (German philosopher)—Spengler rose to international celebrity in the 1920s on the basis of *The Decline of the West*, a controversial examination of the

cyclical nature of history. Although frequently deprecated by professional historians, *The Decline of the West* became one of the most influential philosophical works of the twentieth century.

Olaf Stapledon (English novelist)—An important influence on the works of C. S. Lewis, Arthur C. Clarke, and Stanislaw Lem, Stapledon was the author of what he described as "fantastic fiction of a semi-philosophical kind." Today, critics regard his novels as among the most significant and accomplished examples of science fiction and speculative writing.

Leslie Stephen (English biographer and critic)—A distinguished man of letters, Stephen is ranked among the most important literary critics of the late nineteenth century.

Leon Trotsky (Russian essayist and political philosopher)—A leader of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Trotsky was also a historian, biographer, and one of the most influential political theorists of the twentieth century.

Beatrice and Sydney James Webb (English social writers)—Prominent members of the progressive Fabian society, the Webbs wrote sociological works significant to the advent of socialist reform in England and influenced the work of several major authors, including H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw.

Simone Weil (French philosopher and essayist)—Weil was a social activist and mystic whose writings explore the nature of God, the individual, and human society.

Oscar Wilde (Anglo-Irish dramatist, novelist, and poet)—A crusader for aestheticism, Wilde was one of the most prominent members of the nineteenth-century "art for art's sake" movement. *TCLC* will devote an entire entry to his play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which is considered his best and most characteristic work as well as the apogee of drawing-room farce.

Additional Authors to Appear in Future Volumes

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 Shestov, Lev 1866-1938

Shiels, George 1886-1949
 Skram, Bertha Amalie 1847-1905
 Smith, Pauline 1883-1959
 Sodergran, Edith Irene 1892-1923
 Solovyov, Vladimir 1853-1900
 Sorel, Georges 1847-1922
 Spector, Mordechai 1859-1922
 Spengler, Oswald 1880-1936
 Squire, J(ohn) C(ollings) 1884-1958
 Stavenhagen, Fritz 1876-1906
 Stockton, Frank R. 1834-1902
 Subrahmanya Bharati, C. 1882-1921
 Sully-Prudhomme, René 1839-1907
 Sylva, Carmen 1843-1916
 Thoma, Ludwig 1867-1927
 Tomlinson, Henry Major 1873-1958
 Trotsky, Leon 1870-1940
 Tuchmann, Jules 1830-1901
 Turner, W(alter) J(ames) R(edfern)
 1889-1946
 Upward, Allen 1863-1926

Vachell, Horace Annesley 1861-1955
 Van Dine, S. S. (William H. Wright)
 1888-1939
 Van Dyke, Henry 1852-1933
 Vazov, Ivan Minchov 1850-1921
 Veblen, Thorstein 1857-1929
 Villaespesa, Francisco 1877-1936
 Wallace, Edgar 1874-1932
 Wallace, Lewis 1827-1905
 Walsh, Ernest 1895-1926
 Webb, Mary 1881-1927
 Webster, Jean 1876-1916
 Whitlock, Brand 1869-1927
 Wilson, Harry Leon 1867-1939
 Wolf, Emma 1865-1932
 Wood, Clement 1888-1950
 Wren, P(ercival) C(hristopher) 1885-
 1941
 Yonge, Charlotte Mary 1823-1901
 Zecca, Ferdinand 1864-1947
 Zeromski, Stefan 1864-1925

Readers are cordially invited to suggest additional authors to the editors.

Pierre Drieu La Rochelle

1893-1945

French novelist, poet, short story writer, and essayist.

A noted man of letters, Drieu was one of a number of French intellectuals who espoused fascist ideals during the period between the world wars, ideals which led eventually to his collaboration with German occupation forces in World War II. Drieu's reactionary views arose primarily from his conviction that the formation of a martial state based on moral vigor and physical fitness would remedy the profound spiritual malaise which plagued France as a result of the decay of traditional values. His portrayals of disillusioned, decadent, and alienated individuals, generally regarded as personae of the author himself, clearly illustrate this concept of malaise and have led critics to identify Drieu as the precursor of existentialist writers Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Drieu's literary reputation was severely damaged by his political activities; for many years after the war, critics were reluctant to express admiration for the work of a fascist writer. However, recent translations of his works into English have revived critical interest in his fiction.

Born in Paris, Drieu was the son of an unsuccessful lawyer and his wife. According to Drieu's own account, his parents' marriage was a tempestuous one, undermined by frequent quarrels, financial instability, and adultery. As a result, their child was often left in the care of his maternal grandmother, a vigorous country woman who entertained him with tales of the heroic exploits of his countrymen. These tales had an enormous impact upon Drieu, who came to revere Napoleon and the martial spirit of Napoleonic France. Planning a career in the diplomatic service, Drieu attended the prestigious school of Political Science at the University of Paris, but his hopes were destroyed when he failed the examinations required for acquisition of a degree. He was, however, temporarily spared the task of choosing an alternate career by being drafted into the infantry a few days after his departure from the university.

Drieu had been in the army only a short time when the First World War began. Unlike the majority of his literary contemporaries, Drieu found war an exhilarating experience, and he revelled in the heroic élan and hearty camaraderie of men in wartime. When Drieu was wounded and confined to a hospital bed for several weeks, he began to write poetry in order to express the strong feelings aroused in him by the spectacle of an entire continent in conflict, but was dissatisfied with the result and discarded these early efforts. Then, during a second period of hospitalization for another injury, he read Paul Claudel's *Odes* and was impressed by their free verse forms. Inspired, he attempted once again to express his thoughts in poetry, this time with much success. These war poems, published in 1917 as *Interrogation*, gained critical acclaim, establishing Drieu as a major spokesman for his generation.

Drieu thus emerged from the war in considerably improved circumstances. He had proved himself as valiant a soldier as any of his ancestors and, despite his earlier academic failures, he had become a respected author. In 1919, he was asked to be a regular contributor to one of France's most renowned intellectual journals, *La nouvelle revue française*, then under



From Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, directed by Marc Hamrez. © Editions de l'Herne.

the direction of André Gide. Freed from the necessity of earning a living by his marriage to a wealthy woman, Drieu was able to devote most of his time to writing. After publishing a second volume of poetry in 1920, he concentrated his efforts on the composition of novels and essays, all of which explore the political questions that had come to dominate his attention. Drieu's study of French history and the events of the war had convinced him that France, and in fact all of Europe, had entered a period of decline characterized by political weakness, social chaos, and moral decadence. Believing that this condition posed a dire threat to the territorial integrity of the entire continent, which was likely to succumb to the domination of a younger, more dynamic state such as the Soviet Union, Drieu recommended the formation of a pan-European government. Throughout his writings of the twenties, Drieu wrestled with the question of exactly which ideological foundation would best serve his proposed new state and provide a cure for Europe's spiritual malaise. He was tempted to join his friends and colleagues the Surrealists in their endorsement of communism, but while he agreed with their contention that the old order must be destroyed, he saw in their credo primarily a materialistic impulse toward mediocrity. Drieu's inability to accept communism led him to break with the Surrealists in 1925, though he deeply regretted the loss of their friendship. Finally, in 1934, Drieu published *Socialisme fasciste*, an-

nouncing his decision that fascism would be the saving grace of Europe. Seeing in the infant Third Reich the kind of heroic spirit and unity of purpose he had been seeking, Drieu believed that a Europe united under German hegemony could thwart what he perceived as the imperialistic aims of both the United States and the Soviet Union. As a result of this position, which he maintained throughout the thirties despite the obvious abuses of power it justified, Drieu was offered a post in the Vichy government during the German occupation of France. He declined, stating that intellectuals were bound by duty to remain outside established regimes in order to preserve an unbiased perspective and the power to criticize. It was at this time that he assumed the directorship of the *Nouvelle revue française*. When the war ended, Drieu, conscious of having chosen the wrong side, felt compelled to regain his lost honor. Believing that the best way of doing so was to refuse to submit to trial and execution for collaboration with war criminals, he committed suicide in March of 1945.

Critics agree that the concept of decadence forms the thematic core of all Drieu's work and that this concept is a highly individualized synthesis of Drieu's own psychology and experiences. Drieu inherited from his grandmother the conviction that France had been gloriously powerful in earlier times, but had become weak and unable to defend itself as a result of the laziness and spiritual torpor of its people, who wanted only to immerse themselves in hedonistic pastimes. Critics note that this conviction was reinforced by Drieu's perception of his own immorality and inadequacy. Later, strongly influenced by the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Drieu came to view all existence in terms of "the will of power" and to equate spiritual vitality with moral superiority. Thus, the fact that France, England, and the Low Countries were very nearly absorbed into the young and vigorous republic of Germany during World War I, and were saved only by the intervention of the United States was for Drieu proof that the governments of Europe had degenerated to a state of moral decay and spiritual bankruptcy, leaving them weak and vulnerable.

In Drieu's fiction, the concept of decadence is explicitly manifested. The moral lassitude of society is mirrored in the characters, most of whom drift through purposeless lives, vainly attempting to find meaning and fulfillment in depravity. This technique dominates the early novels and stories, particularly *L'homme couvert de femmes*, in which Drieu frankly portrayed his own promiscuity, and *Le feu follet*, which features a drug-addicted gigolo as the protagonist. The characters of these novels all serve a single purpose: to illustrate the adverse effects of decadence upon the individual and thereby to criticize French society within the context of fiction. One novel of this period, *Blèche*, is the psychological study of a moral man's response to forced confrontation with the existence of evil and is generally considered Drieu's best work, revealing his growing sophistication as a writer in its depth of analysis and structural elegance. The later novels, *Gilles*, *L'homme à cheval*, and *Chiens de paille*, are more polemical in nature, causing some critics to regard these works as attempts on Drieu's part to justify his fascism. Much critical attention has also focused on Drieu's portrayals of male-female relationships, a central feature in all his fiction. Equating femininity with weakness and thus with inferiority, Drieu considered the only harmonious relationship to be one of male dominance and female submission.

Although Drieu's novels are strongly and consistently autobiographical, the development of his political thought is most

easily traced through his essays. In *Mesure de la France*, the essay which established Drieu's reputation as an astute political commentator, he proposes the immediate and total annihilation of the old order, but presents no clear program for restructuring government, except the assertion that it will be young men like himself whose mettle has been tested in battle who will take the lead. This lack of constructive proposals is characteristic of all the early essays, reflecting Drieu's reticence to endorse any existing ideology and his inability or unwillingness to construct an alternate one. Even the declarations of *Socialisme fasciste* are tentative; while Drieu admired the collective spirit of fascism, he mistrusted the fierce nationalism and materialism of the two proto-fascist states, Italy and Germany. By the beginning of World War II, however, Drieu had come to believe that the hopeless decadence and apathy of the French people could only be remedied by a draconian transformation of society, much like the one being effected in Germany under Hitler. Conscious that the kind of state thus produced would fall far short of his proposed oligarchy of the young and vigorous, Drieu nevertheless applauded the German occupation of France and the resulting dissolution of the regime he found so distasteful. Drieu's wartime writings are largely endorsements of the Germans, chiding the French people for their xenophobic attitudes, denouncing Jews and communists, and pointing out the preferability of fascism to the kind of communism being practiced by Joseph Stalin. Many critics have attempted to explain Drieu's conversion to fascism, and the consensus is that the concept of a centralized government with nearly unlimited powers was simply amenable to Drieu's basically authoritarian personality and atavistic political ideals.

Always highly respected in France, Drieu's fiction did not come to the attention of English-speaking critics until the mid-1960s, when translations of his works began to appear. Although critics unanimously denounce his nonfiction for its political orientation, many praise his fiction. His characters, like those of Ernest Hemingway, are considered accurate, perceptive portraits of the post-World War I generation, and his explorations of their psychological states have been praised for depth of insight. While some maintain that the quality of Drieu's fiction is seriously marred by didacticism, he is regarded by many prominent critics as one of the most important figures in French literature of the interwar period.

(See also *Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 117.)

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Interrogation* (poetry) 1917
- Fond de cantine* (poetry) 1920
- Etat civil* (novel) 1921
- Mesure de la France* (essays) 1922
- Plainte contre inconnu* (short stories) 1924
- L'homme couvert de femmes* (novel) 1925
- Le jeune Européen* (essays) 1927
- Blèche* (novel) 1928
- Genève ou Moscou* (essays) 1928
- Une femme à sa fenêtre* (novel) 1930
- [*Hotel Acropolis*, 1931]
- L'Europe contre les patries* (essays) 1931
- Le feu follet* (novel) 1931
- [*The Fire Within*, 1965; also translated as *Will o' the Wisp*, 1966]
- Drôle de voyage* (novel) 1933
- La comédie de Charleroi* (short stories) 1934
- [*The Comedy of Charleroi, and Other Stories*, 1973]