# WORLD AUTHORS

## 1950-1970

WAKEMAN

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*A Companion Volume to Twentieth Century Authors*

*Edited by*
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*Editorial Consultant*
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THE H. W. WILSON COMPANY
New York · 1975

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION DATA

**Wakeman, John.**
**World authors, 1950-1970.**

(Authors series)
"Continues the work done by Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft in Twentieth century authors [and its first suppl.]"

1. Literature, Modern—20th century—Bio-bibliography. I. Kunitz, Stanley Jasspon, 1905- Twentieth century authors. II. Title. III. Series.
PN451.W3 809'.04 [B] 75-172140
ISBN 0-8242-0419-0

# PREFACE

THIS BOOK continues the work done by Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft in *Twentieth Century Authors*, and by Kunitz and Vineta Colby in their *First Supplement* to that volume. *Twentieth Century Authors*, published in 1942, set out to "provide a foundation-volume of authentic biographical information on the writers of this century, of all nations, whose books are familiar to readers of English." It dealt with more than 1,800 authors, many of whom provided autobiographical articles. The *First Supplement* followed in 1955, bringing all the original biographies up to date, and adding 700 more. Since these 2,500 authors have not been brought forward into the present work, it is called a companion rather than a supplement to the preceding volumes.

As it is, we deal with 959 authors, most of whom came to prominence between 1950 and 1970. We also include a number of writers whose reputations were made earlier, but who were absent from the previous volumes because of a lack of biographical information, or because their work was not then "familiar to readers of English." This criterion has now lost much of its force, thanks to the vastly increased propagation of translations since World War II.

Otherwise, this volume in the Wilson Authors Series follows the policies of its companions. Some authors are here, that is, because of their literary importance, others because of their exceptional popularity. Most are imaginative writers—poets, novelists, dramatists—but we have also included some philosophers, historians, biographers, critics, theologians, scientists, and journalists whose work seemed of sufficiently wide interest or influence.

About half of the authors in this book have provided autobiographical articles. These have been reproduced without alteration (except of course those that have been translated from foreign languages, where accuracy has been sought even at the cost of elegance).

The editorial notes on authors and their works were composed by specialists in the literatures concerned, and checked by independent researchers (most of them also specialists) with a rigor that has added years to the expected gestation period of the book. The original editorial notes have since been expanded and revised and checked again and again as fresh information has appeared. (The length of these articles, which by and large reflects the importance of their subjects, is also affected by such extraneous considerations as the quantity and diversity of their work, and the availability of information about them.) Discrepancies between our accounts and those

in other books have been referred to the most authoritative sources available—to the texts or title pages of books discussed, to national bibliographies, to the authors themselves or their literary executors. Errors quite inevitably remain, but fewer, it is hoped, than are usually to be expected in a work of this scale.

Critical comment is fuller than in the earlier volumes, but abides by the same principle, attempting not "an independent appraisal but . . . a fair summation of representative critical response." Beyond this, we have quite often taken the risk of suggesting connections between an author's experience of life and the kind of books he writes. There are some artists, moreover—sometimes even quite minor ones—who achieve or suffer an emblematic status, so that their lives, no less than their books, offer clues to the social or moral or psychological mechanisms of their time and place. We have frequently gone beyond a chaste recital of events and dates to provide information or anecdotes that seem to us illuminating or suggestive in these terms.

In general, the book is intended for students and common readers (though some of the autobiographical articles, at least, will be of interest to scholars as well). We have therefore striven for simplicity in such vexed matters as pseudonyms and the transliteration of foreign names. Thus, in transliterations, we have preferred the forms made familiar by trade publishers to the daunting constructions urged upon each other by warring specialists. The bibliographies are equally utilitarian. Most of them list, with dates of first publication, all of an author's published books. In a few specified cases, however, a particularly prolific author is represented by only a selection of his titles. And on the other hand we have sometimes listed even uncollected short stories by foreign authors who have otherwise published little in English. A similar policy has been followed in the lists of writings about an author and his work: the more abundant the material, the more selective the list.

Foreign titles are usually followed by an English version of the title and a date in parenthesis. The date is that of first publication of the original work. The English title appears in roman type if we have supplied the translation; in italics if the book has actually been translated and published under that title; in quotation marks if it is a poem, story, or other short piece translated and published under that title in a magazine or collection. Dates given in the text for plays are usually specified as dates of writing or of first *production;* dates given in the bibliographies are dates of first *publication.* A necrology of authors whose deaths were reported too late for inclusion in the text will be found at the end of the book.

My warm thanks are due to the contributors, whose names are listed below. Some are already well known, and many deserve to be; some have

made translations or helped with research; some have written one article and others many. There is not space to indicate the special nature and extent of my gratitude to each. However, I must single out four people who not only wrote much original matter but shared generously and companionably in the editorial drudgery: Rosalynde Ainslie, Konstantin Bazarov, John Elsom, and Susan Macdonald. And it is a particular pleasure to acknowledge the crucial contribution of the poet Stanley Kunitz, originator of the Wilson Authors Series, who, acting as Editorial Consultant in the planning and execution of this volume, made available to us an enormous body of information and wisdom about authors and books.

J. W.
*May 1974*

## Contributors

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***ABÉ, KOBO** (March 7, 1924– ), Japanese novelist, poet, and dramatist, writes: "I grew up in Mukden, in the Japanese colony of Manchuria. My father was a doctor and he taught at the medical college there. The first writer to influence me must have been Edgar Allan Poe. At junior high school, I made myself popular with my classmates by assembling them during the lunch hour and telling Poe stories. When I ran out of Poe, I had to make up similar stories of my own.

"In those days, I liked to paint pictures in imitation of the Constructivists, and to collect insects, and to solve mathematical problems, especially geometry. I was a wretched linguist. As for sports, I was required to practice *kendo*, Japanese fencing, and to run the two-thousand-meter race.

"In 1940, when I was seventeen, I returned to Japan and enrolled at Seijo High School in Tokyo. Then I got tuberculosis, and during the year I spent recuperating, I devoured Dostoevsky. That was the year the war began.

"Fascism was gradually intensified, and though I was opposed to it emotionally, at the same time my sense of isolation led me to desire assimilation, and I read as much as I could get of Nietzsche, and Heidegger, and Jaspers. Unfortunately, there were no Japanese works to give me the strength I needed and sought. Military training was compulsory, and when I was given the lowest existing military rank I began to hate school itself, though I still liked mathematics as much as ever. My teachers urged me to major in mathematics at the University, but my father was determined that I should become a doctor, and in 1943 I entered the University of Tokyo as a medical student.

"Emotionally I was very disturbed and my state of mind grew steadily worse until I was cutting classes often. I recall this period in my life very indistinctly, though I do remember being taken once to a mental hospital by a friend. Possibly I was the more normal of the two, for shortly afterwards my friend went mad. At any rate, for that two-year period I did almost nothing but read Rilke's poems on form and structure, which were an obsession with me.

"Late in 1944 I heard a rumor that Japan would soon be defeated. Suddenly, a passionate desire for action revived itself in me and, conspiring with a friend, I forged a certificate of ill health and crossed the ocean to Manchuria without a word to the University. At that time, the government had to be convinced that your reasons for wanting to travel abroad were sufficient before you could leave the country. Happily, my father had opened his own hospital in Manchuria, while my friend's father was a high-ranking official in the Manchurian government. We had heard that his official duties brought

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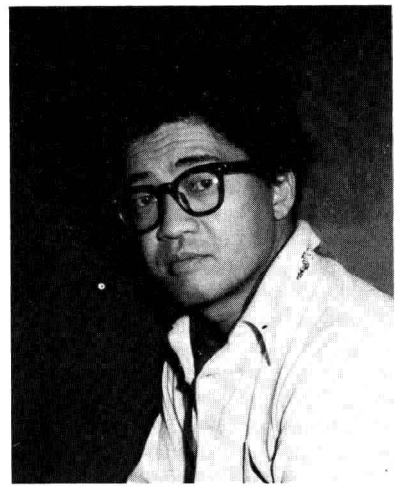

KOBO ABÉ

him into contact with the bandits in the Manchurian backlands, and we planned to join up with them, and why not, since Japan was soon to be defeated anyway?

"As it turned out, though, my life, until that day in August when the surrender came, was spent in peaceful idleness with my family in Mukden. Then, suddenly, the war was over, and a vicious anarchy reigned. The state of anarchy made me anxious and afraid, but at the same time I suspect it thrilled me too, aroused my hopes. At least that terrific wall of authority had disappeared. There was a typhus epidemic that winter and my father, who had been treating victims all over the settlement, contracted the disease and died. In this way, I was released from my obligations, first to the state, and then to my father.

"But survival itself did not become a real agony until the end of 1946, after I had shipped back to Japan. I was extremely poor and undernourished; just staying alive from day to day took all my energies. By peddling charcoal in the streets and taking whatever odd jobs I could get while I went to school, I managed somehow to graduate, but I lacked the funds to pursue a medical career further. Sometime during this period I began jotting stories down in my school notebooks, and the year after I graduated an editor happened to see one and it was published in a magazine. For the first time in my life, my own ability had earned me some money. And so I became a writer. In 1951, I received the Akutagawa Prize for Literature, and knew that I would never retrace my steps.

"I will never forget that my adolescence began amidst death and ruins."

Abé's literary career began with the publication, at his own expense, of *Mumei Shishu* (Poems by an Unknown, 1948), in which he showed his interest in the existentialism of Jaspers and Heidegger. At this stage he was attracted to communism, and he soon made a name for himself as a literary revolutionary and critic of capitalism. *Akai Mayu* (Red Cocoon, 1950) was awarded a literary prize, and in 1951 he received the highly coveted Akutagawa Prize for his novel *Kabe—S. Karuma-shi no Hanzai* (The Wall—The Crime of S. Karuma). Already evident in his work was a preoccupation with the problem of identity, which has continued to concern him, and his technique of creating a private or allegorical world against which to measure the contradictions apparent in his own society.

Of the score of plays and novels which Abé has produced, four novels have so far been translated into English by E. Dale Saunders. The first of them was *Suna no Onna* (1963, translated as *The Woman in the Dunes*), which was admirably filmed by Teshigawara Hiroshi. An entomologist looking for specimens along a remote shoreline finds shacks built in pits in the dunes and a whole strange community of people who spend their lives in an endless struggle against the engulfing sand. The young man falls into one of these pits and is trapped there. His jailer—and fellow-prisoner—is a young widow who needs his help to hold back the sand.

Out of this bizarre situation, Abé constructs a story of great narrative fascination in its account of survival techniques in an immensely specialized environment, and of the young man's ingenious escape attempts. And it is no less absorbing and convincing as a study of a developing emotional relationship which is full of universal implications —about the fragility of identity, about freedom and responsibility, fear and compassion, and about the whole nature of human societies. What so impressed the many critics who admired the book was the texture of its writing. Action is slowed almost to a standstill to permit the microscopically detailed description of physical particulars. Above all, in a way which reminded many readers of the French New Novelists, the sand itself is scrutinized with such intensity that it becomes a protagonist in the novel—sometimes a creeping, suffocating enemy, sometimes a golden film that lends beauty to the human body.

*Tanin no Kao* (1964, translated as *The Face of Another*) deals more directly with the identity theme. A scientist, hideously scarred in a laboratory accident, laboriously constructs a completely new face and, thus disguised, sets out to seduce his own wife. This allegory, which has a host of antecedents in both Japanese and Western literature, seemed to most critics altogether too overt. There was a warmer reception for *The Ruined Map*, a different approach to the same theme, in which a detective, searching in a corrupt and nightmarish city for a missing man, so identifies with his quarry that he *becomes* him. For many critics, *Inter Ice Age 4*, about a computer that can predict the future, confirmed the author's "mastery of the philosophical thriller."

Lewis Nichols has described Abé as "slight, engaging, with heavy, horn-rimmed glasses and an unruly mop of black hair." A former member of the Communist party, he now calls himself a Socialist. His wife Machi is an artist and has illustrated some of his books.

PRINCIPAL WORKS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION: The Woman in the Dunes, 1964; The Face of Another, 1966; The Ruined Map, 1969; Inter Ice Age 4, 1970.

ABOUT: *Periodicals*—Encounter July 1965; The New Leader November 9, 1964; New York Times Book Review August 30, 1964; October 25, 1964; July 9, 1966; Saturday Review September 5, 1964; September 26, 1970; Times Literary Supplement March 6, 1969.

**ABEL, LIONEL** (November 28, 1910– ), American critic, dramatist, and translator, was born in New York City, the son of Alter and Anna (Schwartz) Abelson. He attended St. John's University, New York (1926–1928), and the University of North Carolina (1928–1929). Little has been published about his early career. For some years, probably just after World War II, he lived in Paris and came to know Sartre, Camus, and other leaders of French existentialism.

Abel reached the conclusion that it is no longer possible to write dramatic tragedy, that modern man is altogether too self-conscious a creature to achieve the necessary quality of "demonic" exaltation. On the other hand, simple realism offers little satisfaction to the creative dramatist. The solution, Abel believes, is a mode which he calls "metatheatre" and which he finds not only in the work of such moderns as Pirandello, Genet, and Beckett, but also, for example, in Shakespeare and Calderón. It is a fundamentally existentialist concept which "assumes that there is no world except that created by human striving, human imagination. . . . . For metatheatre, order is something continually improvised by man." Thus the "metaplay" is about people who must consciously and deliberately invent the roles they will play in life, and Abel (as Susan Sontag says) is calling for "a theatre whose leading metaphors state that life is a dream and the world a stage."

These ideas were first advanced in essays in such magazines as *Commentary*, *Partisan Review*, and the *New Leader* and later published in book form in 1963 as *Metatheatre*. Most reviewers seemed to find Abel's theories more stimulating than convincing, but were unstinting in their praise for his practical

criticism of contemporary playwrights, and especially for his essay about Jack Gelber, which had already received the Longview Award. Hostile comment centered on the bellicose and uncompromising nature of Abel's argument, and particularly on his notion that scarcely any real tragedies had been written since the Greeks (even by Shakespeare, who is allowed only *Macbeth*). Richard Gilman thought the concept of metatheatre provided an illuminating critical approach to such writers as Pirandello and Genet, but was merely "irrelevant or obfuscatory" when applied for example to Shaw and Ibsen. Susan Sontag had no such reservations, calling Abel's arguments "clean-cut, pugnacious, prone to slogans, oversimplified—and, in the main, absolutely right." She described *Metatheatre* as "the first American-style existentialist tract," and added that "no English or American writer on the theatre has done anything as interesting or sophisticated."

Abel has translated Sartre, as well as Rimbaud, Apollinaire, Ghelderode, and others, and has also sought to dramatize his theories in a number of plays of his own, most of them philosophical comedies drawn from Greek or biblical myths. The first, *The Bow and the Gun* (1947), is an attempt at verse drama. *The Death of Odysseus* (1953) is a one-acter in which the hero, failing to evade his fate by cunning, goes to certain death at the hands of Telegonus, his son by Circe. Its point, Gerald Weales thought, is that the man who lives by his wits must find in the end that a talent for survival is no preparation for dying. Saul Bellow found it "a wonderfully intelligent and exhilarating comedy."

*Absalom*, Abel's most successful play, is a full-length work which was produced by Theatre Artists in 1956 and which won two awards as the best off-Broadway play of the year. It centers on the struggle for the throne of David between Solomon, who has been promised the crown, and Absalom, who deserves it better but seeks God's grace as well as his justice. It is an existentialist play in that Absalom "creates" his own destiny as Orestes does in Sartre's *The Flies*. Weales found it confusing and tedious but Richard Gilman, who called it "a ziggurat of inverted conceits" enjoyed it for "a certain dash, a certain resonance."

*The Pretender*, which had a short off-Broadway run in 1959, is about a Negro novelist who seeks to avenge an imagined insult to his wife. Harold Clurman called it "an intellectual comedy on a subject about which it is usually considered bad taste to joke . . . a *jeu d'esprit*: mental in inspiration and almost abstract in content." *The Wives* (1965) is a metatheatrical reworking of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, in which Herakles' wife tries to win back her husband's love with disastrous results for them both. Robert Mazzocco concluded that "Sartre is in Abel's head, and Cocteau is in his heart. Unfortunately, too often there's nothing but sawdust on his tongue." Despite the circulation of a petition to arouse interest in the play, it closed after a brief run.

Gerald Weales believes that Abel's lack of success as a dramatist is due to the fact that "despite occasionally clever lines, he has very little wit; his prose style is heavy where the genre demands polish, even elegance; he seems unwilling to use the devices of melodrama and farce that Sartre has always used to animate his philosophical discussion and, in the absence of such devices, Abel's failure to create characters becomes a fatal weakness." His critical work is quite another matter, however, and Richard Gilman has said that when Abel puts aside his theories, "there is no critic of drama who can surpass him."

Abel received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1958, a Longview award in 1960, an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1964, and a Rockefeller Foundation grant in 1966. In recent years he has taught as a visiting professor at Columbia, Rutgers, Pratt Institute, and the State University of New York at Buffalo, where in 1970 he became professor of English. Abel was married in 1939 to Sherry Goldman, from whom he is now divorced. Their only child, a daughter, died in 1964. The author was married again in 1970, to Gloria Becker.

PRINCIPAL WORKS: *Criticism*—Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form, 1963. *Plays*—Death of Odysseus *in* Playbook, 1956; Absalom *in* Artists' Theatre, 1960.
ABOUT: Weales, G. American Drama Since World War II, 1962; Who's Who in America, 1970–1971. *Periodicals*—Commentary October 1963; Commonweal June 25, 1965; New York Review of Books July 1, 1965; Partisan Review Summer 1960; Spring 1963.

**ABRAHAMS, PETER (HENRY)** (March 19, 1919– ), South African-born novelist, memoirist, and journalist, was born in Johannesburg, the fourth child of James Abrahams, an Ethiopian, and Angelina DuPlessis, a Cape Colored woman of mixed French and Negro origin. His father died when Abrahams was still very young, and he grew up among Colored (half-caste) rather than African people in the Johannesburg slums, except for a period when he lived with an aunt in an African "location" (township) outside a white country town. He went to work before he went to school, selling firewood, working for a tinsmith, cleaning hotel rooms, carrying parcels, and doing a variety of other odd jobs.

He was still totally uneducated when, in his tenth year, a white secretary in the office where he was working read him the story of Othello from

PETER ABRAHAMS

Lamb's *Tales From Shakespeare*. This awoke in him a passion for literacy which led him, soon afterwards, to St. Peter's School, the famous Anglican school in Johannesburg which educated a whole generation of African intellectuals.

When Abrahams was fifteen he discovered, in the library of the Bantu Men's Social Centre, that black men had already created a canon of significant writing. At that moment, as he wrote in his autobiography *Tell Freedom*, "Something burst deep inside me. The world could never belong to white people only! Never again." The works of black American writers like W. E. B. DuBois, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, and Langston Hughes convinced him that he also, a black man in South Africa, could become a writer.

From St. Peter's Abrahams went on to a teachers' training college at Pietersburg. He edited the college magazine and published his first poems in the *Bantu World*. He graduated in 1938, taught for a year in Cape Town, and worked briefly in Durban as a magazine editor. In 1939, partly because he wanted to go to England, partly because some articles he had published made him something of a political undesirable in South Africa, he signed on as a ship's stoker. "Perhaps life had a meaning that transcended race and colour," he concluded in his autobiography. "If it had, I could not find it in South Africa. Also there was the need to write, to tell freedom, and for this I needed to be personally free." For two years Abrahams traveled all over the world as a seaman but in 1941 he settled in England, earning his living as a writer and journalist.

While still at St. Peter's, Abrahams had become aware of the developing Pan-African movement, and had encountered the South African Communist party through a white couple who had befriended him. These influences are reflected in the revolutionary idealism of his first books—the volume of stories called *Dark Testament*; *Song of the City*, a novel about a young African from the country come to make his way in the urban ghetto who learns that he must overcome, through understanding, his fear of the white man; and the rather similar *Mine Boy*, the most successful of his early works.

In *The Path of Thunder* an educated African returns to his native village with ideas of reform and racial equality and inevitably clashes with the white population. *Wild Conquest* is a historical novel about the great northward trek of the Boers in the 1830s, and their running war with the Matabele. In this book Abrahams largely overcame the sentimentality and stylistic clumsiness which had marred his earlier novels, and achieved some memorable characterizations, interestingly enough succeeding better with his white characters than with the African tribesmen. Abraham's first major success was his autobiography, *Tell Freedom*, whose quiet power was warmly praised.

There followed what many consider the most effectively distanced and controlled of Abrahams' novels to date, *A Wreath for Udomo*. An educated African, after a period of study and sexual freedom in London, returns to lead his country (which some readers identified as Ghana) to independence and begins to modernize it along European lines. But political success involves Udomo in personal treachery—he betrays his friend Mhendi to the authorities of a white-ruled state and in the end is himself murdered by the tribalist, conservative wing of his party.

Though some reviewers found the book rather tract-like, "interesting rather than moving," Edmund Fuller thought it "authentic tragedy," and James Stern called it an "alternately tender and terrible story," impressive in its author's "rigid determination to be fair, to reveal the vices and virtues of both sides [white and black]." Michael Wade has pointed out that the book marks the end both of Abrahams' romantic belief in pre-European African society as a sort of golden age, and of his optimism for the postcolonial future. *A Wreath for Udomo* alienated Abrahams' political friends, but it remains his most impressive literary achievement.

Since 1955 Abrahams has lived in Jamaica, where he has worked as editor of the *West Indian Economist*, controller of the West Indian daily radio news network, and news commentator on Jamaican radio and television, writing also for the London *Observer*, *Holiday*, and other publications. In 1964 he gave up most of these activities to make more time for writing fiction, and in 1965 he published *A*

*Night of Their Own*, his first novel in nine years, set in South Africa during 1963–1964, when the country's underground liberation movements were dramatically smashed, at least temporarily, by the government. An exciting adventure story is set against this background of racial conflict, complicated by further tension between the black Pimpernel who is the hero, and the family of the Indian girl he falls in love with. Here as in other books Abrahams deals more convincingly with the actions of his characters than with their thought processes, represented in rather naïve interior monologues, but most reviewers admired "the clear lines of the narrative."

*This Island, Now*, the first of Abrahams' novels to be set in the West Indies, deals with the seizure of power on an unnamed Caribbean island by a tough young idealist, a man of the people, after the death of the benevolent old dictator who had ruled since independence. It was thought somewhat pretentious and "literary" in style, rather overschematic and, again, more perceptive in its treatment of white characters than black. Michael Wade condemned it as a sad book which exhibits "little feeling for the harsh economic and social problems" of the Caribbean, and a deep pessimism about the survival of "Western liberal values" in the Third World, but others thought it an eminently fair-minded examination of the extent to which good ends justify questionable means.

Abrahams has written in *Return to Goli* about a return visit to South Africa in the early 1950s. He has been married twice—in 1942 to Dorothy Pennington and in 1948, after that marriage was dissolved, to Daphne Miller, an artist. Abrahams has three children. His recreations, he says, include travel, gardening, tennis, walking, and "meeting and talking with people."

PRINCIPAL WORKS: *Fiction*—Dark Testament (short stories), 1942; Song of the City, 1945; Mine Boy, 1946; The Path of Thunder, 1948; Wild Conquest, 1950; A Wreath for Udomo, 1956; A Night of Their Own, 1965; This Island, Now, 1966. *Nonfiction*—Return to Goli (reportage), 1953; Tell Freedom (autobiography), 1954; (ed. with Nadine Gordimer) South African Writing Today, 1967.

ABOUT: Current Biography, 1958; Mphahlele, E. Down Second Avenue, 1959; Mphahlele, E. The African Image, 1962. *Periodicals*—Book World September 17, 1967; Commonweal July 13, 1956; Critique 1 1968; Ebony December 1967; New York Times May 20, 1956; New York Times Book Review September 24, 1967; New Yorker June 30, 1956; Times Literary Supplement March 25, 1965.

***ABSE, DANNIE** (September 22, 1923– ), Welsh poet, novelist, and dramatist, writes: "I was born in Cardiff, South Wales, the youngest of four children. My father had been brought up in Bridgend and my mother was born at Ystalyfera in the Swansea valley. Initially I was very much influenced by my two elder brothers, Wilfred and Leo. Nowadays they are both rather eminent, and I am often asked, 'Are you any relation to Wilfred or Leo Abse?' Wilfred is a psychoanalyst and teaches at the University of Virginia, U.S.A. Leo is the assiduous Member of Parliament for Pontypool and happens to be, according to newspapers, one of the ten best dressed men in Great Britain, which does not surprise me since he wears my cast-offs.

DANNIE ABSE

"When I was a schoolboy (at St. Illtyd's College, Cardiff) I would overhear, at home, their warring discourse. There would be much talk of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. In short, I was exposed at an early age to the dialogue that was aired over and over by adult intellectuals in the thirties, and about this time I began to write poems, partly because of my own youthful engagement with the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War. I think, though, most of the time I lived inside my own head and made excursions into the world outside merely to swear at Franco, and to play football and cricket. A few years passed and Hitler and the noise outside came nearer and nearer to Wales, and one night this noise actually entered our house. The ceiling fell in, a wall collapsed, and I, proud of being an air raid victim, ended up in Bridgend Cottage Hospital on my back rather alarmed by the man islanded in the next bed to me who with the night-nurse regularly offered prayers to Krafft-Ebing.

"I left Cardiff, eventually, to become a medical student in war-time London, and here my education continued not so much at medical school but

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in the permissive ambience of Swiss Cottage where I happened to find lodgings. Swiss Cottage, at that time, seemed to be occupied by old German-Jewish refugees, by youthful painters, deserters, budding burglars, and presentable young women. Here I discovered a gregarious café life more characteristic of Paris than moody London. Later some of the youngest café habitués became famous and sometimes I see them in Hollywood films or on television. Many of the others have ended up in jail. One young man I knew used to pilfer books from Foyles before selling them to the café habitués. The books he stole, I remember, always had titles like *Crime and Punishment* and *Thieves in the Night*. During this period my first book of poems, *After Every Green Thing*, was accepted for publication. I wish now that it had never been published.

"After qualifying at Westminster Hospital I served in the RAF and found myself in a very different milieu from Swiss Cottage. I continued to write poems, however, for then, as now, I was committed to the next poem that would 'happen' and then the next. I say 'happen' because I have never been able to will a poem into existence. Though poetry is written in the brain the brain is bathed in blood, and consequently one must wait for—to use an old-fashioned word—'inspiration.' Sometimes whilst waiting I have written novels and plays, especially since I was 'demobbed' from the RAF, for I would rather write, say, a play, than commit fine thoughts to a notebook or private diary. In any case, as I grow older, my thinking becomes more confused. I mean that the more I read and the more I experience and the more I know, the more I journey into ignorance.

"In 1951, I married Joan Mercer, whom I had met earlier in Swiss Cottage. We live now in Golders Green, London, with our three children. I am still waiting for the next poem, and if the periods of waiting sometimes become prolonged I recall my motto, which is: 'Be visited, expect nothing, and endure.'

"I have contributed to various English and American periodicals—*The New Statesman*, *Encounter*, *The Listener*, *The New Yorker*, etc., and I give poetry readings and broadcast from time to time. One of my plays won the Charles Henry Foyle Award for 1960. A compilation from my works—poems, prose, and a one-act play, *Gone*, was presented at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London, in 1964, and I have edited or co-edited several poetry anthologies, the most recent being *Modern European Verse*, which was published in the Vista paperback series. It's a lovely life."

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Dannie Abse, who as a physician specializes in diseases of the chest, has always seen himself "as a poet who practises medicine, not as a doctor who writes poetry." It was in 1942 that he began his medical studies and in 1949 that his first book of poems was published. During the 1950s (to his subsequent regret), Abse was much involved in the literary civil wars of the period—notably as editor, with Howard Sergeant, of *Mavericks* (1957). This was an anthology of work by young poets who, "unafraid of sensibility and sentiment," rejected the antiromanticism which dominated English poetry at the time.

Abse's own first book, *After Every Green Thing*, was attractively youthful and eloquent, full of Socialist and humanitarian idealism, but rather woolly and generalized. *Walking Under Water* showed an advance in formal control, though at the cost of some of the freshness and exuberance of the first collection. In *Tenants of the House* Abse found his proper mode and tone, which he explored and developed with growing authority and resourcefulness in *Poems, Golders Green* and *A Small Desperation*. His *Selected Poems* were received with almost unanimous pleasure.

Roland Mathias has referred to Abse's "not-yet-defeated optimism and an anxious sensitivity, to people as to events." These qualities appear in poems on a broad and increasing range of subjects—the rival claims of art and family, Vietnam, nostalgia for the past, Ezra Pound, the nature of love, and the character of place. Quite often in his later work he turns with a scrupulous and sensible compassion to his relations with his patients. His voice now is dryer and more aphoristic—closer to Auden than to Dylan Thomas—but his easy, colloquial poems are charged with an awareness of the irrational and even the metaphysical, conveyed through allegory or more directly, as in "The Grand View": "There are moments when a man must praise / the astonishment of being alive / When small mirrors of reality blaze / into miracles: and there's One always / who, by never departing, almost arrives." Abse has contributed with great success to public poetry readings in Britain and the United States.

Although he thinks of himself as primarily a poet, it was in fact his first novel, *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve*, which made Abse's reputation as a writer. A series of autobiographical vignettes about his childhood and early youth in Cardiff, it reminded reviewers of the prose work of Dylan Thomas and also of William Saroyan in its gaiety and lyrical spontaneity. A second novel, *Some Corner of a Foreign Field*, about a doctor doing his obligatory service in the postwar Royal Air Force, was thought rather skimpy and shapeless, but most reviewers enjoyed *O. Jones, O. Jones*, a very funny account of the adventures of a manic, disaster-prone Welsh medical student in London.

In *Medicine on Trial*, Abse discusses the present state of the art in his other profession, touching on medical training, on spectacular advances (like antibiotics) and spectacular failures (like thalidomide), and also on drug addiction, quackery, the greed of the pharmaceutical firms, the German doctors who experimented on living human beings at Auschwitz. Some readers complained of Abse's "subservience to the authority of Freud," but most found the book a capable, thoughtful, and highly readable survey.

PRINCIPAL WORKS: *Poetry*—After Every Green Thing, 1949; Walking Under Water, 1952; Tenants of the House, 1957; Poems, Golders Green, 1962; Dannie Abse: A Selection, 1963; A Small Desperation, 1968; Selected Poems, 1970; Funland, 1973. *Fiction*—Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve, 1954; Some Corner of a Foreign Field, 1956; O. Jones, O. Jones, 1970. *Plays*—Fire in Heaven, 1956; The Eccentric, 1961 (*also in* Best One-Act Plays of 1960–1961, 1963); Three Questor Plays (House of Cowards, Gone, In the Cage), 1967; The Dogs of Pavlov, 1972. *Nonfiction*—Medicine on Trial, 1968. *As editor*—(with Howard Sergeant) Mavericks, 1957; Modern European Verse, 1964.

ABOUT: Murphy, R. (ed.) Contemporary Poets of the English Language, 1970; Rosenthal, M. L. The New Poets, 1967. *Periodicals*—Anglo-Welsh Review Winter 1967; Cahiers Franco-Anglais 1, 1966; Jewish Quarterly Winter 1963–1964; Listener March 21, 1967; Poetry Book Society Bulletin Summer 1962.

***ACHEBE, CHINUA** (November 16, 1930– ), Nigerian novelist, writes: "I was born in Ogidi in Eastern Nigeria of christian parents. The line between christian and non-christian was much more definite in our village thirty years ago than it is today. When I was growing up I remember we tended to look down on the others. We were called in our language 'the people of the church,' and we called the others—with the conceit appropriate to followers of a *higher* religion—'the people of nothing.'

"Thinking about it today I am not so sure that it isn't they who ought to have been looking down on us for our apostasy. But the bounties of the christian God were not to be taken lightly—education, paid jobs and other things that nobody in his right senses can look down upon. In fairness I should add that the new faith stood and stood firmly for certain civilized standards of behaviour; it said, for instance, that twins were not evil and must no longer be destroyed.

"My father joined the new faith as a young man and eventually became an evangelist and church teacher. His maternal grandfather who had brought him up (his own parents having died early) was a man of note in the village. From all accounts he had a strong sense of humour. He had received the first missionaries in his own compound, but after a few days sent them packing again for their doleful

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CHINUA ACHEBE

singing. Said he, 'My neighbours might think it was my funeral dirge.' But in the end he did not stop my father joining them; the old fellow also had foresight.

"I was baptized Albert Chinualumogu. I dropped the tribute to Victorian England when I went to university, although some early acquaintances (e.g. my mother) still call me by it. The second name which in the manner of my people is a full-length philosophical statement I curtailed into something more businesslike.

"I have always been fond of stories and intrigued by language—first my mother tongue, Ibo, and later English which I began to learn at about the age of eight.

"I did not know I was going to be a writer because I had no notion that such beings existed until relatively late. The folk stories my mother and elder sister told us had the immemorial quality of the sky and the forests and the rivers. Later at school I got to know that the European stories we read were written by Europeans—the same fellows who made all the other marvellous things like the motor-car. We didn't come into it at all. We made nothing that wasn't primitive and heathenish.

"The nationalist movement after the Second World War brought about a mental revolution which began to reconcile us to ourselves. We saw suddenly that we had a story to tell.

"At the university I read some appalling European novels about Africa (like Joyce Cary's much praised *Mister Johnson*) and realized that our story could not be told for us by anyone else no matter how gifted or well-intentioned.

"Although I did not consciously set about it in

that way my first book, *Things Fall Apart*, was an act of atonement with my past, the homage of a prodigal son.

"But things do happen fast here. I had hardly begun to bask in the sunshine of reconciliation when a new cloud appeared. Political independence had come; the nationalist leader of yesterday (with whom it was not difficult to make common cause) became today the not-so-attractive party boss—or worse. It seems I shall never know real peace."

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Chinua Achebe is widely regarded as the most accomplished of the many African novelists now writing in English and is certainly one of the most successful: his first novel has sold half a million copies. His theme, as the titles of his books often suggest, is the conflict of old and new ways of life in Africa, a conflict which his own life experience typically reflects. He was educated first at the village school provided by the Church Missionary Society, where his father taught, then at the Government Secondary School at Umuahia, and at the University College of Ibadan, where he studied English literature, and became one of the first generation of graduates in 1953. In 1954 Achebe began work for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service as talks producer, and in 1961 he was appointed director of external broadcasting, a post which took him frequently abroad. In 1966 he became chairman of the Society of Nigerian Authors and a member of the Council of the University of Lagos.

At a conference on Commonwealth literature held in Leeds in 1964, Achebe commented on his motivation as an artist: "It would be foolish," he said, "to pretend that we have fully recovered from the traumatic effects of our first confrontation with Europe. . . . I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind. And I don't see that the two need be mutually exclusive."

*Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's first—and in the opinion of many his finest—novel, deals with the traumatic encounter itself. It is set in Umuofia, an Ibo village, in the second half of the nineteenth century, and involves two intertwined tragedies: the personal tragedy of Okonkwo, who lives his life strictly according to the tribal code; and the public tragedy of his village, which hands down its collective wisdom from generation to generation but is defeated, when the white man comes, by its inability to deal with a situation without precedent.

Okonkwo is a self-made man, whose self-discipline has excluded all that is soft from his nature. He accidentally causes the death of a man at his father's funeral and is forced into seven years' painful exile. When he returns at last to the village, the white man has already built not only a church but a courthouse, where foreign justice is administered. Okonkwo's friend Obierika remarks: "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." So it proves when, at the climax of the book, a messenger from the white court insults a clan meeting. Okonkwo, acting alone, kills the intruder and then hangs himself. The white commissioner plans to incorporate the episode in a paragraph of his projected book, "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger."

Gerald Moore wrote later that "Achebe has, as it were, gone back to that bleak little paragraph of despised and garbled history. With love, with understanding and with justice, he has drawn from it a story of people just as real and individual as ourselves, whose world had its own completeness and whose life its own dignity." Few reviewers at the time of the book's publication had Moore's insight, however, and most tended to dismiss it as a piece of innocent exotica: "an authentic native document, guileless and unsophisticated," with "no sense of plot or development."

By the time *No Longer at Ease* appeared two years later, however, reviewers had attuned themselves more successfully to Achebe's manner, and though some readers could still see only "a disarmingly ingenuous Nigerian novel," John Coleman in the *Spectator* wrote with enthusiasm that the book "moves towards its inevitable catastrophe with classic directness. Nothing is wasted and it is only after the sad, understated close that one realises . . . how much of the Nigerian context has been touched upon."

The second novel is the story of Obi, Okonkwo's grandson, educated abroad by the subscriptions of his clan members, when he returns to Lagos as Umuofia's first university graduate. He is expected to prove himself in the civil service, to uphold the dignity of his village in the places of power. At first full of determination not to succumb to the corruption of Lagos bureaucracy, Obi is eventually overwhelmed by the conflicting demands on him. He must return his study loan to the Umuofia Progressive Association, but he must also display all the trappings of success (car, house, servant, clothes); he knows he ought to feel free to marry the young nurse, Clara, but his upbringing rejects her as an

*osu* (outlaw). His mother threatens suicide; he lets Clara go, accepts bribes for the scholarships he administers, is found out, tried, and imprisoned. Arthur Ravenscroft, in his study of Achebe, suggests that *No Longer at Ease* fails fully to engage us with its hero because Obi is made too naïve and self-deluded, and the cards are thus too obviously stacked against him. In any case, its tone is gray and muted compared with the tension and color of the earlier book.

Achebe's next novel, *Arrow of God*, is once more set in the past, this time around the 1920s, in a remote Ibo village. It centers on the conflicts within Ezeulu, high priest of Ulu, who as representative of the god is responsible for the safety and welfare of his clan. When the white missionaries arrive, Ezeulu must decide whether or not they represent a threat to his people—whether to resist or cooperate. It is a dilemma he is not qualified to resolve. He sends his own son to the mission school, an action which lays him open to charges of collaboration with the enemy. Thus when he does choose to resist, his elders are not behind him, and tragedy follows. Once more, Achebe has demonstrated how the inflexible traditions of African tribal life, which made that society such a stable one, also made it tragically vulnerable to alien pressures unprovided for in the tribal code.

*A Man of the People* is another modern urban novel, one which makes bitter fun of corrupt politicians. Ravenscroft calls it "a sparkling piece of satirical virtuosity, yet we feel throughout that deep anger, bitterness and disillusion are never far beneath the surface." Some critics have found it too savage and too despairing, but the *Times Literary Supplement* enjoyed it as "scabrous, unbuttoned, reckless—a black fabliau."

Achebe's command of language has been admired from the beginning. He is particularly skillful in the use of dialogue to differentiate character, social background, and period. In the historical books, Ibo proverbs are constantly used to express not only a sense of social stability but the spirit of inherited ideas and values. In the urban books, the same proverbs lard the speech of the city exiles but are shorn of their depth of meaning, thrown in to impress, to arouse nostalgia, to revive a sense of community. The city workers in any case speak mainly in pidgin, or assume a pompous "educated" English if they know how, emphasizing their alienation from any culture.

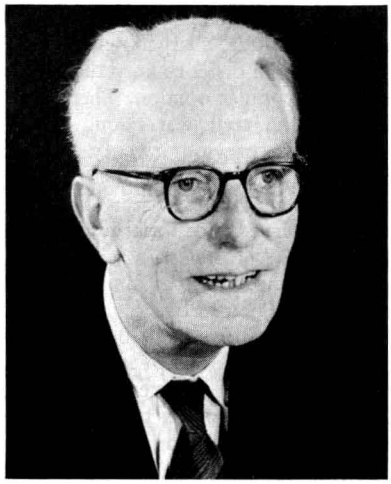
In 1966, after the massacre of Ibos in Northern Nigeria and the military coup in Lagos, Achebe returned to the Eastern Region, where he planned a new publishing venture with his fellow writer the late Christopher Okigbo and others. The scheme fell through when the Region declared itself independent, as Biafra, and civil war followed. With Cyprian Ekwensi and Gabriel Okara he made tours of the United States to raise funds for Biafra, and he was chairman of the Biafra National Guidance Committee, charged with traveling all over the country in order to keep the government in touch with popular opinion. There are several stories about the civil war, along with others written over the previous twenty years, in the collection *Girls at War*, published as the hundredth title in the Heinemann African Writers Series which Achebe served as editorial adviser from 1962 to 1972. *Beware Soul Brother*, a volume of poems written during the war, was joint winner of the Commonwealth Poetry Prize.

After the fall of Biafra in 1970, Achebe took up a senior research fellowship at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Nigeria at Nsukka. Since then he has been appointed first director of the Frantz Fanon Research Centre in Enugu, set up by a "group who share total commitment to the mental emancipation of the black man all over the world." The author is a director of Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd. and of Nwankwo-Ifejika and Company (Publishers) Ltd. He is the editor of *Okike*, a Nigerian journal of new writing. Achebe was married in 1961 to Christiana Okoli, and has four children. He has held Rockefeller and Unesco fellowships and in 1965 received the Jock Campbell *New Statesman* Award.

PRINCIPAL WORKS: Things Fall Apart, 1958; No Longer at Ease, 1960; The Sacrificial Egg and Other Short Stories, 1962; Arrow of God, 1964; Chike and the River (for children), 1966; A Man of the People, 1966; Beware Soul Brother (poems), 1971 (England, 1972); Girls at War (stories), 1972.

ABOUT: Beier, U. (ed.) Introduction to African Literature, 1967; Carroll, D. Chinua Achebe, 1970; Contemporary Authors 4, 1963; Duerden, D. and Pieterse, C. (eds.) African Writers Talking, 1972; Gleason J. This Africa, 1965; Killam, G. D. The Novels of Chinua Achebe, 1969; King, B. Introduction to Nigerian Literature, 1972; Larson, C. R. The Emergence of African Fiction, 1972; McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Biography, 1972; Moore, G. Seven African Writers, 1962; Palmer, E. An Introduction to the African Novel, 1972; Ravenscroft, A. Chinua Achebe, 1969; Vinson, J. (ed.) Contemporary Novelists, 1972; Who's Who, 1972. *Periodicals*—Africa Report July 1964; March 1970; Black Orpheus June 1965; Guardian January 1, 1966; February 28, 1972; Journal of Commonwealth Literature July 1968; Modern Language Quarterly March 1969; New Statesman June 21, 1958; January 29, 1965; July 9, 1965; January 28, 1966; New York Herald Tribune Book Review April 12, 1959; New York Herald Tribune Lively Arts April 30, 1961; Nigeria June 1964; Spectator October 21, 1960; Time August 19, 1966; Times Literary Supplement June 20, 1958; February 3, 1966.

**ACKERLEY, J(OE) R(ANDOLPH)** (1896–June 4, 1967), English memoirist, dramatist, novelist, poet, and editor, was born at Herne Hill in Kent, the son of a wealthy banana importer whose



J. R. ACKERLEY

placid suburban life concealed a curious history. The elder Ackerley had begun his career as a trooper in the Horse Guards, had been bought out of the Army by a homosexual European aristocrat, and had eventually married a Swiss girl and made a fortune. When she died he acquired two mistresses and maintained them in separate establishments. In 1919 he married one of them—Ackerley's mother, a pretty, rather feckless actress who never learned of her husband's remarkable double life. This background, outwardly respectable, but in reality almost comically furtive, explains much about Ackerley, who was for the greater part of his life an active homosexual.

He was educated at Rossall School, fought in the trenches during World War I, and was captured. In 1918 he wrote one of the best of the plays inspired by the war, *The Prisoners of War*, a work which draws its emotional tension from an undercurrent of homosexuality which is never explicit and indeed was apparently unrecognized by contemporary critics. After the war he went up to Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he read law for a while, then English literature. He graduated in 1921 and thereafter for several years was supported by his father while he tried unsuccessfully to make a career as a writer.

From 1928 to 1935 Ackerley worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation as an assistant producer in the Talks Department. Thenceforth, until his retirement in 1959, he served as literary editor of the BBC's weekly magazine, *The Listener*. His predecessor in that post, J. A. Smith, said that he had "never known a literary editor who was so firm with less fuss, less presence in the office and less use of the typewriter." He was an exceptionally fair and eclectic editor with—ironically perhaps—a crusading zeal against all kinds of prudery and bowdlerization.

During his years with *The Listener*, Ackerley met most of the luminaries of the London literary world, and formed some intimate (but not homosexual) attachments. According to his posthumous autobiography, his sexual adventures took place in quite another milieu, among soldiers, waiters, policemen, and errand boys. Ackerley was a sad, sordid, generous man; part of his pleasure was in its furtiveness, but one sensed an underlying bitterness that this should be so. His essential loneliness and unhappiness, however, he bore stoically and privately. And for all his isolation he was capable of inspiring the warm and enduring friendship of a few exceptional people, among them E. M. Forster, whose friendship he described as "the longest, closest, and most influential" of his life.

It was through Forster that Ackerley when a young man secured his appointment as private secretary to the ruler of a small native state in India. When he got there, he found that the Maharajah needed not a secretary but a friend and confidant. It is this experience that Ackerley describes in *Hindoo Holiday*, his first prose work. V. S. Pritchett praised "a delightful tenderness" in the narrative, and called Ackerley "a man whose instinct of understanding is gentle, ready and deep. His humor is the humor of pity and love. He is an artist in understanding." Evelyn Waugh was no less impressed by what he called "a work of high literary skill and very delicate aesthetic perception."

*My Dog Tulip* is an account of the Alsatian (German Shepherd) bitch which entered Ackerley's life in his late forties. He wrote: "She offered me what I had never found in my sexual life, constant, single-hearted, incorruptible, uncritical devotion. . . . From the moment she established herself in my heart and home, my obsession with sex fell wholly away from me." It is a remarkable and beautifully written book, though not for all tastes. Its frankness is exemplary, but the author's morbid interest in the sexual needs of his pet, while sympathetic and loving, testifies to the barrenness of his own emotional life; it also offended the primmer reviewers, though others recognized it as "a masterpiece of empathy."

The word "masterpiece" was also applied by some critics to *My Father and Myself*. This book, which had been begun and then discarded in the 1930s, describes Ackerley's gradual unraveling as a boy of his father's strange double existence, and in this has much of the fascination of a detective story. It also gives a startlingly frank, funny, and circumstantial account of his own homosexual adventures. The book, like its author, is brave, intelligent, and elegant but, in the opinion of some readers, it denies itself the dimension of tragedy, holding back