

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 81



Volume 81

# 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**

**Jennifer Baise**  
*Editor*



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# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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# Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities, and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." *TCLC* "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many libraries would have difficulty assembling on their own."

## Scope of the Series

*TCLC* is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1960 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and excerpting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topic entries widen the focus of the series from individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

*TCLC* is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, which reprints commentary on authors now living or who have died since 1960. Because of the different periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*. For additional information about *CLC* and Gale's other criticism titles, users should consult the Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series preceding the title page in this volume.

## Coverage

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully compiled to present:

- criticism of authors, or literary topics, representing a variety of genres and nationalities
- both major and lesser-known writers and literary works of the period
- 6-12 authors or 3-6 topics per volume
- individual entries that survey critical response to each author's work or each topic in literary history, including early criticism to reflect initial reactions; later criticism to represent any rise or decline in reputation; and current retrospective analyses.

## Organization of This Book

An author entry consists of the following elements: author heading, biographical and critical introduction, list of principal works, excerpts of criticism (each preceded by an annotation and a bibliographic citation), and a bibliography of further reading.

- **The Author Heading** consists of the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. 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.

- The **Biographical and Critical Introduction** outlines the author's life and career, as well as the critical issues surrounding his or her work. References to past volumes of *TCLC* are provided at the beginning of the introduction. Additional sources of information in other biographical and critical reference series published by Gale, including *Short Story Criticism*, *Children's Literature Review*, *Contemporary Authors*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, and *Something about the Author*, are listed in a box at the end of the entry.
- Some *TCLC* entries include **Portraits** of the author. Entries also may contain reproductions of materials pertinent to an author's career, including manuscript pages, title pages, dust jackets, letters, and drawings, as well as photographs 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 with 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.
- Critical excerpts are prefaced by **Annotations** providing the reader with information about both the critic and the criticism that follows. Included are the critic's reputation, individual approach to literary criticism, and particular expertise in an author's works. Also noted are the relative importance of a work of criticism, the scope of the excerpt, and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author. In some cases, these annotations cross-reference excerpts by critics who discuss each other's commentary.
- A complete **Bibliographic Citation** designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Criticism is arranged chronologically in each author entry to provide a perspective on changes in critical evaluation over the years. All titles of works by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type to enable the user to easily locate discussion of particular works. 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. Some of the excerpts in *TCLC* also contain translated material. Unless otherwise noted, translations in brackets are by the editors; translations in parentheses or continuous with the text are by the critic. Publication information (such as footnotes or page and line references to specific editions of works) have been deleted at the editor's discretion to provide smoother reading of the text.
- An annotated list of **Further Reading** appearing at the end of each author entry suggests secondary sources on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights.

## Cumulative Indexes

- Each volume of *TCLC* contains a cumulative **Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in Gale's Literary Criticism Series, along with cross references to such biographical series as *Contemporary Authors* and *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. For readers' convenience, a complete list of Gale titles included appears on the first page of the author index. Useful for locating authors within the various series, this index is particularly valuable for those authors who are identified by a certain period but who, because of their death dates, are 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 *TCLC* volume includes a cumulative **Nationality Index** which lists all authors who have appeared in *TCLC* volumes, arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities, as well as Topics volume entries devoted to particular national literatures.
- Each new volume in Gale's Literary Criticism Series includes a cumulative **Topic Index**, which lists all literary topics treated in *NCLC*, *TCLC*, *LC 1400-1800*, and the *CLC* year-book.
- Each new volume of *TCLC*, with the exception of the Topics volumes, includes a **Title Index** listing the titles of all literary works discussed in the volume. In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale has also produced a **Special Paperbound Edition** of the *TCLC* title index. This annual cumulation lists all titles discussed in the series since its inception and is issued with the first volume of *TCLC* published each year. Additional copies of the index are available on request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the following year's cumulation. Titles discussed in the Topics volume entries are not included *TCLC* cumulative index.

## Citing Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in Gale's literary Criticism Series may use the following general forms to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to materials drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

<sup>1</sup>William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, (AMS Press, 1987); excerpted and reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 94-105.

<sup>2</sup>George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi," *Partisan Review*, 6 (Winter 1949), pp. 85-92; excerpted and reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 40-3.

## Suggestions Are Welcome

In response to suggestions, several features have been added to *TCLC* since the series began, including annotations to excerpted criticism, a cumulative index to authors in all Gale literary criticism series, entries devoted to criticism on a single work by a major author, more extensive illustrations, and a title index listing all literary works discussed in the series since its inception.

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



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# John Beresford

1873-1947

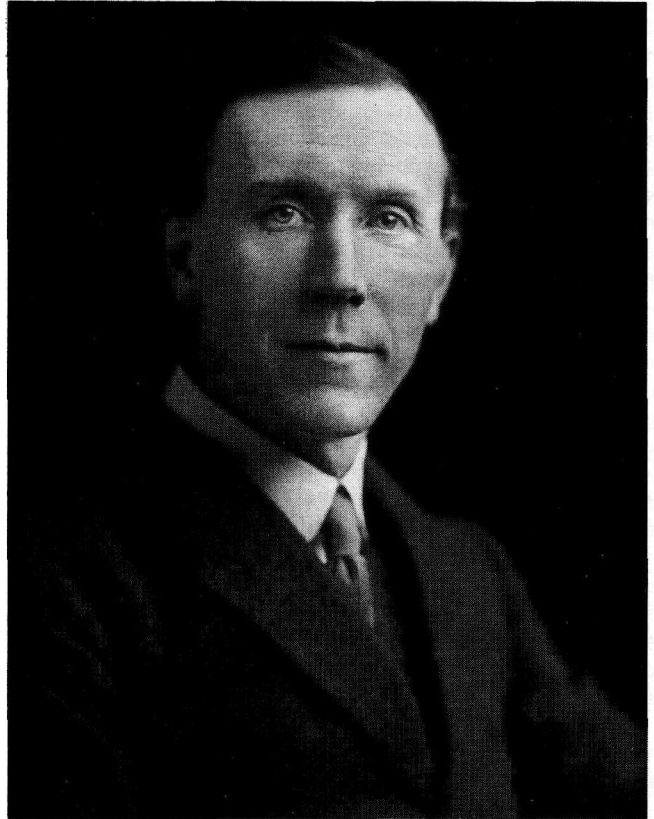
(Full name John Davys Beresford) English novelist and short story writer.

## INTRODUCTION

An early and prolific writer in science fiction and fantasy fiction, Beresford is credited with creating the first significant fictional characterization of a superhuman mind trapped in a world of pedestrian intellect. He was particularly drawn to the world of psychic phenomena and human psychic pathology, and his writings contain thematic plots and incidents relating to altered perspectives, transcendental experiences, dreams, revelations, and fate. Scanning a continuum from intellectual realism to philosophical idealism, Beresford also used his imaginative fancy to subtly instruct his readers on his cherished beliefs and views. These included (and he could argue equally for each), several forms of religion and non-religion, mysticism, faith healing, women's rights, vegetarianism, and social pacifism.

### Biographical Information

Beresford, the second son of a church minister and his wife, was born on March 7, 1873, in Castor, North-hamptonshire, England. His childhood was greatly affected when he suffered infantile paralysis which left him physically impaired, walking with difficulty for the remainder of his life. Having been advised by his father that his career options were thus limited by his disability, he passed through formal and informal education without inspiration, eventually settling for a career in architecture at his father's suggestion. However, he remained uninspired and left his London apprenticeship for a job as a bookseller. During this time, he was increasingly exposed to scientific and philosophical books which stimulated his interest in psychology and the psychic sciences. Cultivating friendships with numerous writers, actors and artists (with whom he collaborated on early works), he began writing fantasy fiction and achieved immediate fame. He eventually wrote more than sixty books, numerous short stories, and plays, most of which were respectfully received, but none achieving the critical acclaim as had attended those first literary efforts. He died in Bath, England, in 1947, at the age of seventy-three, survived by his wife and four children.



### Major Works

Beresford's autobiographical trilogy, comprising *The Early History of Jacob Stahl* (about the coming of age of a young crippled boy) (1911), *A Candidate for Truth* (1912), and *The Invisible Event* (1915), established immediate literary success. But clearly, Beresford's *The Hampdenshire Wonder* (1911) was his most powerful and evocative novel. The story focuses on a young genius alienated by a world of non-comprehending lesser minds unable to communicate with him. This theme, of superior intellect impeded, mutated or destroyed by fundamentalist bigotry and narrow-mindedness, recurred in many of Beresford's subsequent works. Good examples of Beresford's creative best include a collection of stories, *Nineteen Impressions* (1918) and his novel *Goslings* (1913). Another collection of stories, *Signs and Wonders* (1921) searched more deeply into the world of altered minds and psychic phenomena. *God's Counterpoint* (1918) and *An Imperfect Mother* (1920) are additional examples of psychoanalytical novels. Beresford's physical disability contributed to his belief in faith-healing

and metaphysics, subjects treated in *The Camberwell Miracle* (1933) and *The Case for Faith-Healing* (1934). His unfinished autobiography was never published.

### Critical Reception

Following the publication of his first novels, Beresford gained the respect and attention of such literary greats as D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and Bernard Shaw. However, he became increasingly disenchanted with the pressure to continually produce new writings for financial survival. His creativity reached a plateau, and his writings often contained redundant, didactic themes and ideas. Although his work was technically well written, most critical attention remained focused on his earliest novels, which were the more imaginative and captivating, and but for which Beresford might have slipped into literary oblivion.

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## PRINCIPAL WORKS

*The Early History of Jacob Stahl* (novel) 1911  
*The Hampdenshire Wonder* (novel) 1911  
*A Candidate for Truth* (novel) 1912  
*Goslings* (novel) 1913  
*H.G. Wells* (nonfiction) 1915  
*The Invisible Event* (novel) 1915  
*God's Counterpoint* (novel) 1918  
*Nineteen Impressions* (stories) 1918  
*An Imperfect Mother* (novel) 1920  
*Revolution: A Novel* (novel) 1921  
*Signs and Wonders* (stories) 1921  
*All or Nothing* (novel) 1928  
*Real People* (novel) 1929  
*The Meeting Place and Other Stories* 1929  
*The Camberwell Miracle* (novel) 1933  
*Peckover* (novel) 1934  
*The Case for Faith-Healing* (nonfiction) 1934  
*What I Believe* (novel) 1938  
*The Idea of God* (novel) 1940  
*What Dreams May Come* (novel) 1941  
*A Common Enemy* (novel) 1942  
*The Riddle of the Tower* (with E. Wynne-Tyson) 1944  
*The Gift* (with E. Wynne-Tyson) 1947

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## CRITICISM

### *The Bookman* (essay date 1911)

SOURCE: A review of *Jacob Stahl*, in *The Bookman*, June, 1911, p. 144.

[In the following review, the anonymous critic praises the "bioscopic methods" of Beresford in *Jacob Stahl*, but notes that Beresford fails to fully develop his cast of characters.]

There is another Richmond in Mr. Arnold Bennett's field, for *Jacob Stahl* goes by rights side by side on the shelf with *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger*. Jacob, in whose veins runs mixed blood that includes a little German and a little Jew, falls out of his perambulator in early infancy and injures his spine. He begins to walk when he is fifteen, thanks altogether to the ministrations of a delightful Aunt Hester. Too delicate a plant for the rough and tumble of school, he derives instruction of a slender and disordered character from a tutor, and is eventually articulated to an architect. He is weak-willed but imaginative, and though his womenkind have spoilt him more than a little he is yet a person with ideals, in marked contradistinction to his brother. Eric, on the other hand, is vigorous alike mentally and physically, but with a knowledge that "two and two must and ever will make four, a fact for which there is no palliation and no excuse needed," but of a comprehension unable to include an emotional two or a temperamental four. Eric makes a practical success of life. Not so Jacob, or not in this volume at least, though the "Early History" of the title-page seems to promise a sequel. The anticlimax that arrests the course of his first love-story, an episode of the tale that, for all the boldness of its unconventionality, shows singular mastery and restraint in the treatment, puts a sudden end to his lackadaisical way of life in Ashby Sutton, and Jacob descends on London with the rather hazy intention of becoming a successful architect. His introduction to new aspects of "life" takes place under the tutelage of Tony Farrell, a faithfully portrayed example of a not very attractive type. Mr. Beresford, who makes his sudden and unheralded appearance on the stage of authorship with a literary equipment that is almost startling in its completeness, disposes his narrative after the bioscopic methods of Mr. Wells and the already noticed Mr. Bennett. Not yet perhaps can he boast the cultivated dexterity displayed by these authors in handling a whole group of characters, and he is less at pains to picture the influence of his protagonist on an assorted group of men and women than their collected influence on him. Thus, while Jacob as the central figure bulks ever larger, his companions dwindle, and the resultant picture, though it remains life, is still life a little distorted. Jacob has all the lime-light. He plays an actor-manager's part. In only one other person does Mr. Beresford allow himself to become really deeply interested. She is called Aunt Hester.

### *The Bookman* (essay date 1911)

SOURCE: A review of *The Hampdenshire Wonder* in *The Bookman*, September 11, 1911, pp. 263-64.

[In the following review, the anonymous critic offers praise for Beresford's characterization in *The Hampdenshire Wonder*.]

Mr. Beresford, we take it, was unknown until six months ago, when he produced *Jacob Stahl*. Now *Jacob* was an admirable example of the bioscopic method, but



it never could have prepared any of us for the advent of this amazing Wonder-child. Figure to yourself a professional cricketer who bowls better than any one else in the world, and has suddenly the misfortune to lose a finger. A man of remarkable character in many ways, he concentrates his will on having a son who shall be born without habits. The idea is, you must know, that the son will learn everything that his father can teach him and will furthermore, being born without habits, find himself enabled to start where his father left off, and become an even better bowler. Ginger Stott meets the ideal mother for such a child, and Victor arrives. Here we dive into extravagance at once, but of so remarkable a character that it keeps us almost spell-bound. What follows [in *The Hampdenshire Wonder*] is philosophy, psychology, poetry, allegory, what you will. It is strangely sad, some might find parts of it even repellent. For Ginger's scheme has gone awry, and he has fathered, not the bowler that the world has waited for, but a strange creature with a huge head, the habit, its only one, of complete silence (it never cries and never answers questions), and the power of making you feel, when it looks at you, that you are utterly insignificant. To his bitterly disappointed father Victor is a "blarsted freak," and no more, but the mother (a wonderfully clever and sympathetic study) knows better. For the Wonder has been born ages before the world was ready for him or his kind. With the realms of imagination, of art, music, and poetry dead to him, he yet bears the heavy burden of all knowledge. His lonely childhood, and the effect of his extraordinary personality on the various types of humanity that figure in his little world, are sketched with amazing skill. The parson hates him, his father fears him, Challis, the dilettante squire, is interested in him in a dilettante and scholarly fashion. The village idiot, recognising that here is the only creature he has met having no spiritual kinship with the people about him, tries to make friends with the Wonder, and persecutes him with a kind of loathsome adoration. Only Victor's mother understands. It is difficult to review such a book. Who wants to be referred to the most powerful and moving of its scenes should read, first, the account of the Wonder's birth, where the half-demented father and the crotchety doctor squabble in the cottage parlour the while, upstairs, Intelligence is being born into the world. And there is the scene in the squire's library where the Wonder, having sampled learning as we understand it and known an awful disappointment, tries once, and only once, to tell the two scholars who are questioning him what he is and what is the end of all knowledge. It would, of course, be impossible to let the Wonder grow up. The uncertain manner of his death is finely suggested, and Mr. Beresford is here at his best in the tragic picture of the mother. The book ends, very fittingly, with a remarkable essay on the uses of mystery.

Ludwig Lewisohn (essay date 1920)

SOURCE: "Creation and Analysis," in *The Nation*, Vol. 111, No. 2872, 1920, pp. 74-75.

[In the following review, Lewisohn finds *An Imperfect Mother* absorbing and interesting, but faults the novel's concentration on scientific information.]

Mr. J. D. Beresford explained, in two recent articles of very high interest, the uses to which the novelist could put the discoveries of the Freudian psychology. The problem is an extraordinarily fascinating one. For whatever criticism may be made in detail, there is no doubt that Freud has discovered a very great truth which, like all great truths, is simple enough: Repressed impulses and impressions passively received do not glide through, but become, for better or worse, permanent elements in the affected soul. So soon as we know this the activities of our memory undergo a change in character. Moments that were before but faintly lit leap dazzlingly out of the dim past and help us to account for all we are and do. Now Mr. Beresford's method [in *An Imperfect Mother*] is not to attribute to his characters a self-knowledge illuminated by psycho-analysis. But he explains the life of Stephen Kirkwood through a "slight departure from the normal" which was due "to a severe nervous shock in his early childhood." So far, so good. But it seems to us that Mr. Beresford has actually made his fable richer than he claims and that the nervous shock in question is not really necessary to account for what follows. The case is common. A woman of some artistic gifts and morbidly keen sensibilities, distinctly over-sexed, has married a grubby little shop-keeping person. The two daughters resemble their father. The boy, the youngest, is fine and sensitive and has from the start, to use Freud's drastic term for a thing commonly of infinite subtlety, the Oedipus complex. But almost at the same moment of his adolescence there flashed into Stephen's soul the first perfectly pure yet indescribably tingling influence from a girl, and his mother elopes with a musician. Hence it is not in the least surprising that Margaret Weatherly's smile, her lingering, her momentary preference for him, sink permanently into his subconsciousness, that there occurs an unconscious substitution of her for his mother, which is admirably brought out by the incident of the mother's shocking laugh and the much later laughter of Margaret that recalls it, and that Stephen is lastingly and perfectly contented when he marries Margaret. And Mr. Beresford is quite right in asserting that the happiness of that marriage is not due either to Margaret's beauty or to any special sympathy or understanding that unites these two. That particular marriage simply meant to Stephen the complete abreaction of all his sex-impulses from childhood on. Hence his content. The story is woven with great delicacy and with unobtrusive skill and is remarkably interesting. Yet it is doubtful whether really great fiction would thrive on so much scientific awareness. In the richest creative efforts these things will be organic and immanent as they are in life. It is better for the critic to discover them than for the author to have put them in.

R. Brimley Johnson (essay date 1922)

SOURCE: "J. D. Beresford," in *Some Contemporary Novelists (Men)*, Leonard Parsons, 1922, pp. 97-119.

[In the following essay, Johnson presents an overview of Beresford's writing career.]

There is always an obvious danger in labels; though the temptation to grouping, since one must compare, becomes at times well-nigh irresistible. Mr W. L. George has divided modern novelists into "self-exploiters, mirror-bearers, and commentators": of whom those with most promise "stand midway between the expression of life and the expression of themselves; indeed, they try to express both, to achieve art by criticising life; they attempt to take nature into partnership."

Mr Beresford, certainly, is both a conventional novelist—in the accepted sense of the storyteller—and a modern analytic: at once reflecting and critical. He works through both mediums—self-expression and imagination or, more strictly, invention. He is, both ways, somewhat laboured, after the manner of his day, but he does not neglect either dramatic effects or firm characterisation.

Jacob Stahl, whom one assumes himself, is elaborately set out in *three* novels; and there is really no reason why he should not continue the subject indefinitely, after the manner of Miss Richardson: because "Jacob was ever at the beginning of life." He could never settle in a groove.

On the other hand, *God's Counterpoint* is a genuine creation. Philip, perhaps, is not *quite* human; but the conception has a very marked originality, is consistently maintained, and produces pure drama. It touches, moreover, upon the pre-occupation with sex in a spirit that is both independent and sincere.

In *Housemates* I fancy that we may recognise Stahl—under a new name; in circumstances which, if similar, are yet sufficiently diverse. It is not, in fact, the *same* man: but one with many of the same characteristics, offering very similar occasions for sympathy.

*The Hampdenshire Wonder* stands plainly apart, as mere fantasy. Here Mr Beresford plays with psychology as Wells and others have played with science: carrying invention beyond reality, whence to philosophise upon the abstract.

His later story, *The Jervaise Comedy*, is frankly a trifle: wooing the spirit of comedy to expose pride. It is a clever enough piece of work, but might have been written by many, almost at any time.

*These Lynnekers* is no less pure observation than *God's Counterpoint*; but less concentrated and, in one sense, more ordinary. It is based, in fact, on that time-honoured framework of opposition between the hero and his family: they are all slaves to the herd instinct, he alone taking an independent, superior line of conduct. *The House in Demetrius Road*, too, stands alone as a study in personality—ruined by drink, with the devotion accorded the "real" man.

Whatever his mood, however, Mr Beresford writes with assurance. He is not, I imagine, overweighted—like so many of our young writers—with a sense of his own responsibility towards life and art. He has no very obstinate theories upon social questions, no startling ideas about fiction. Writing to-day he can, of course, scarcely escape conscious craftsmanship, hardly avoid the discussion of marriage or sex. But he uses, and accepts, both as incidental to competent work. Being, above all things, a clever professional novelist, he has taken for atmosphere the spirit of his age, using it without pose or passion.

As already implied, Mr Beresford is, perhaps, most original in *God's Counterpoint*. This is the story of an idealist, a Galahad among the quagmires of modernity. Philip Maning has strange, strict ideas about women; which, in fact, amount to mental disease or obsession. Inheriting from a savagely Puritan father elementary conceptions of sin, he mixes the old monastic conception of the "devil in women" with fanatic worship of the Woman. To him, all questions, or aspects, of sex were "thrust into one definite category, labelled 'beastliness.' He had no other word for it, and that one very well indicates his attitude. To him these things were unclean, and even at school he had begun to practise a fastidious cleanliness in his person." Here, as indeed everywhere, he is morbidly oppressed by the sense of sin. A true Calvinist, he dreads all spontaneous emotion, which he calls a temptation of the Evil One. Unclean visions haunt his suppressed nature during the night hours, seriously disturbing his mental balance.

Only a strong character could have survived such a confusion of moral values. Luckily, Philip *is* strong; and, curiously enough, a man of imagination. In consequence, over the ordinary affairs of life he governs himself sternly, but remains attractive, and wears his unique "goodness" with charm. He is, in fact, really impressive—extorting affectionate respect; and the Holy of Holies whereinto he lifts good women shines fair and beautiful. They are, obviously, above sex.

After the preliminary home life, carefully analysed, Philip enters the world through the medium of a somewhat unusual publishing office. Robert Wing "saw literature in terms of 'what suited the public.' . . . It was his affair to provide 'pure' literature for the millions who were sick and tired of eternal immorality." His pet authors did not proclaim or denounce. Their object "might be defined as the effort to prove that to be good was not necessarily to be dull." Himself a hypocrite, and personally sensuous, Wing naturally welcomed the amazing seriousness and sincerity of Philip as a business asset of great value. He believed, with all his soul, what the other professed. And the combination—with humorous interludes—worked well for a time.

Then our hero fell in love: or perhaps one should rather say—imagined that he had found the ideal woman. Evelyn naturally disapproved of his attitude towards her

from the beginning, but loved him, trusting familiarity would make him normal. However, his firm shyness and delicate idealism remained unshaken, and all advances towards real intimacy and understanding came from her. Philip dreaded, first marriage itself, and then—more fastidiously—its consummation. Even when half convinced and yielding to the genuine love between them, he felt (or at least soon came to feel) that he had lowered his own ideal and degraded her. They were driven apart.

After which came, inevitably, spiritual collapse. Meeting the ordinary female butterfly, a creature of light passions and totally unmoral, Philip indulged infidelities which would never have tempted a more normal and healthy-minded loving husband.

But "only his body was scarred." The real Philip emerges once more; still an idealist but now also a man. This time he woos his wife humbly yet passionately; and she, being a woman, understands. Because now "he can teach her to love," she trusts the future.

If morbidity here be slightly strained or exaggerated, Mr Beresford redeems the fault by a fine optimism. Philip and Evelyn challenge and conquer fate by sheer courage and strong faith. It is a triumph of character, revealing the best possible to man. For once the perversities of introspection and self-analysis do not produce tragedy, because at bottom the man has a clean heart and a brave soul.

Dickie in *These Lynnekers* begins life with somewhat the same attitude. Sex seemed vaguely "shameful" to him as a boy; and "always, the confinement of a house had had the effect of presenting love in the shape of something to be despised and desperately fought against, something secret and unclean."

But such questions did not, for him, represent life as a whole; they seldom invaded his consciousness, and then quite incidentally. His pre-occupation was, rather, "holding his own" in the practical affairs of life, against the prevailing atmosphere of a curiously ineffective family type.

All the Lynnekers had charm—and prejudices. They were born to drift—pleasantly—towards disaster. They were "the County," and for them, always, "everything went on just the same." Only Dickie, and one of his sisters, were not like that. She married "unsuitably," and drifted to Canada; he, facing the world, saved the family—crowning success by a happy marriage.

Mr Beresford contrives his plot, however familiar its framework, with considerable ingenuity. His hero is a fine, healthy-minded personality: not quite typical, but yet fairly normal. His father and mother are dramatically contrasted, yet harmonious. They and the family all possess strongly-marked individuality. The novel, in fact, is thoroughly interesting, thoroughly competent;

and every way an artistic achievement. But it does not invite detailed criticism.

Personally I am disposed to regard *The Jervaise Comedy* as a slighter effort in the same manner. We have here again a complacently "superior" family group; also disturbed by the "independence" of one member—here, a daughter, who insists on marrying the chauffeur. There is a touch of farce and melodrama in this episode, and though Melhuish, who tells the tale, claims to experience a "form of conversion" in his own love affair, no one troubles very seriously about his changed heart. This, in fact, is no more than a pleasant comedy, pleasantly planned, and well told.

It is permissible, maybe, to regard *The House in Demetrius Road* as one more study in genius and egoism. Greg, indeed, is not precisely an artist, at war with his own imagination, but he has—clearly enough—the potentialities of exceptional greatness and a commanding personality. He combines intimate charm with almost intolerable selfishness and aggressive discourtesy. He is the complete bully.

He is not, however, on ordinary occasions wholly responsible for his own words or deeds, being practically ruined by drink. A less dominating personality would have entirely collapsed before this story begins. It is concerned with the heroic attempt at cure by his secretary and his sister-in-law; two young people of spiritual enthusiasm who fall in love with each other at sight, but are prepared, in the event, for complete self-sacrifice in their devotion to a most thorny endeavour.

Mr Beresford has given us a very graphic picture of exaltation—following effort and hope, reaction—following failure and despair. The cure, in fact, is (for a time) thoroughly successful; but Greg's insane jealousy—at any division of allegiance—brings about the inevitable relapse, and the lovers are practically driven to desertion: holding that they have, after all, a right to happiness.

It would be difficult to imagine a horror revealed more dramatically; a character wasted more utterly; a sacrifice rewarded with more justice. The narrative carries conviction, and rivets our attention throughout.

We all, naturally, read Mr Beresford himself into the *Stahl* trilogy; and certain "confessions" of that hero regarding his literary career rather suggest that our novelist attaches particular importance to his essays in the "fantastic"; but I do not find *The Hampdenshire Wonder* at all convincing. Mr Beresford has been compared to "a man who has overcome a stammer," and so speaks with undue "precision and deliberateness . . . is almost too self-possessed."

In the interpretation of Victor Stott, the Wonder, the "stammer" has conquered him. That incredible infant, whose intelligence o'ertops humanity in the ratio of

some millions to one, and who knows everything, condescends occasionally, indeed, to interpret life, but always, to my mind, remains halting and obscure. Mr Beresford appears to be altogether lost among the philosophies. Really, he does not know what to do with the "Wonder" he has created; and ordinary mankind is far more interesting. Victor's father and mother, in fact, are really remarkable people. The pre-natal pre-occupations which are supposed responsible for the phenomenon, are ingeniously suggested, and their attitude towards their uncanny offspring is well thought out. But Victor, being inhuman, fails to interest the plain man. As Challis, the travelled philosopher, remarked: "Take my advice, leave him alone. . . . And meanwhile leave us our childish fancies, our little imaginings, our hopes—children that we are—of these impossible mysteries beyond the hills."

I have very much the same feeling about *The Goslings*: though, obviously, the author intends here to present a philosophy of life. Having imagined that the whole of Europe (and to a lesser degree, also, America) is devastated by a terrible plague which carries off practically the whole male population, he describes for us a world of women, who are driven to nature for mere sustenance—literally earned by the sweat of their brow. They are also, inevitably, deprived of all protection or guidance from the habits and customs of civilisation, thrown back on their own initiative, and compelled to establish a new code of practical morality. Mr Beresford's sympathies are, it is clear, with those who welcome the change and have no yearnings after a return to the old order of things.

The occasion affords him an opportunity for several suggestive criticisms of convention, but as no reform of the social organism is likely to be affected by such means, I am, personally, not interested in the argument. It all seems in some way unreal, almost inhuman. It lacks even adventure.

Mr Beresford's slim volume of short stories called *Signs and Wonders* belongs to the same group, and reveals similar characteristics. The "Night of Creation," however, is an effective ghost-story if somewhat over-weighted with comment; and there is one suggestive and interesting, though purely conjectural, idea that recurs in all his most cryptic presentations of "other worlds," where "things happen" in the sky: "The people of that incredibly distant world, walking, as they always do, with their gaze bent upon the ground, are probably unable to see the signs and wonders that blaze across the sky. They, like ourselves, are so pre-occupied with the miserable importance of their instant lives."

This, I take it, variously expressed in Mr Beresford's different visions of the unseen, may be interpreted as a hint of purgatory. In other words, he would surmise, or suggest, that man is no more ready, after death than before, to realise the full Revelation; scarcely, in fact, more spiritual; still intent upon material trivialities. Though somewhat crudely illustrated, the theory has

this justification; that it supports our hope of a gradual, and by no means complete, change through death; a *continuous* spiritual growth towards infinity. Yet the most daring, because most definitely dramatic, of these "guesses at truth," is also—without question—the most real and convincing. "The Miracle" offers a fine illustration of spirituality. Eager to reach the essential spirit personality of her dying husband, "poised out of time and space, away somewhere in the void," a wife finds herself wandering among wraiths of humanity, "peering vaguely downwards with bent head and eyes," till one moves "definitely towards her, drawn by the power of her longing." By her own effort she "would compel him to come with her." And "as she came slowly out of some remote distance to a realisation of herself," the "living dead man," given up by "all the specialists," was "sitting up in his bed . . . boastful to be alive again." Love triumphant cries: "I've brought you back, and I am going to hold you here." Mr Beresford has convinced us that so it was.

There are also, in this volume, several attempts at normal character-sketching, based on effects of the war; but they are, for the most part, too vague or general for edification. Like so many of his contemporaries, Mr Beresford is really hampered by the strength of isolated emotions, lacking aim or cohesion. They do not achieve either reasonable criticism or constructive purpose.

He would have spared us the careful record of George Wallace, who wrote a book "without having put pen to paper," had he remembered Henry James and the exquisite pathos of "The Madonna of the Future."

*Housemates*, on the other hand, though written five years later than the second instalment of *Jacob Stahl*, reads almost like a "study" for that elongated autobiography. The hero, indeed—unlike Jacob—remains an architect: but superficially his apprenticeship is very similar, and his character develops along much the same lines. He is a hesitating, over-modest dreamer of dreams, prone to self-depreciation and self-analysis, yet conscious of power and, by fits and starts, given to startling self-assertion. He is, indeed, completed and dismissed with comparative brevity; but not, therefore, less fully realised or presented. After the usual beginning of a struggle with poverty, and a rude awakening to the complications of real life, he becomes most "unsuitably" engaged and, discovering his mistake, drifts into a boarding-house—where he meets his affinity. He is, as it were, more concentrated than Jacob. The one passion, which from the first proves itself true love, absorbs the man; takes him in hand, transfigures him.

Inwardly, *Housemates*, is pure romance, and wholly satisfying as romance. The personalities of its hero and heroine are individual and strong. But its constructive details fall far below Mr Beresford's usual standard. The minor characters are either commonplace or unreal; the incidents are dull, and Helen's grotesque attempt at supreme self-sacrifice in the cause of friendship strikes a thoroughly false note. It is sheer perverse cant.