

Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

TCLC

107

Volume 107

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**

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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Preface

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TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting 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 on 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.

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- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
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William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, ed. Victor A. Kramer (AMS, 1987), 65- 91; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: The Gale Group, 1995), 94-105.

Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Managing Editor:

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Gordon Bottomley

1874-1948

English poet and playwright.

INTRODUCTION

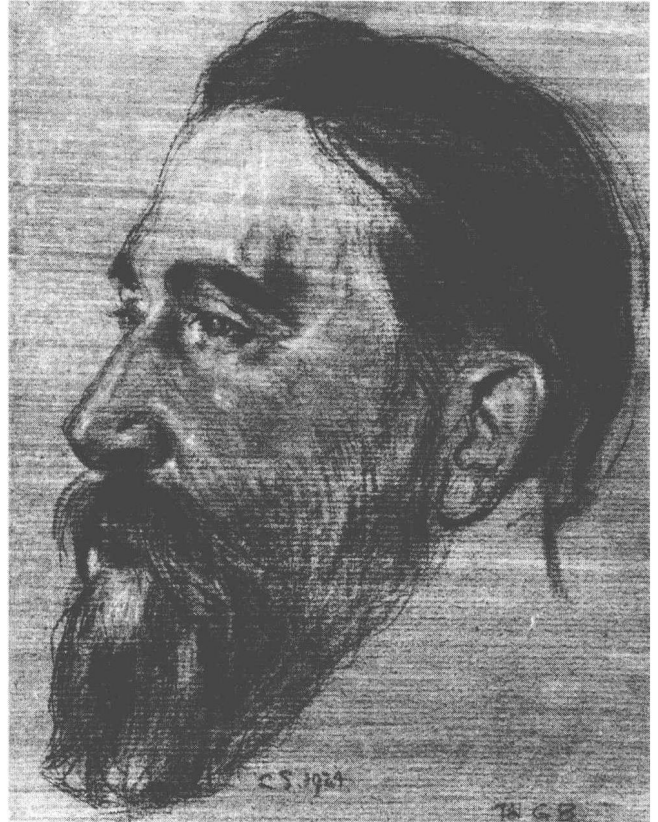
As a writer of verse drama, Bottomley emphasized poetic language over theatrical concerns. Many of his plays were offered without costumes or props, and the lines recited rather than conventionally acted out. Stylistically and thematically, his works resemble those of the great Irish modernist William Butler Yeats.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Bottomley was born February 20, 1874, in Yorkshire, England, where his education began. However, he suffered from a chronic bleeding disorder, which took him away from a banking career and greatly reduced his activity. He relocated to Silverdale, a Lancashire village near the Scottish border, and in 1905 married Emily Burton from a nearby town. The two were said to have had a profound bond, enjoying literature and the arts.

Bottomley published his first collection of poetry, *The Mickle Drede and Other Verses*, in 1896 but later attempted to destroy all copies of this book, which he considered to be immature. With *The Crier by Night* (1902) and *Midsummer Eve* (1905), he turned to verse drama, setting out to revive the art in England. His early plays were respected for their poetic qualities but did not result in long-lasting productions. His *King Lear's Wife* (1920), however, was produced by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and became a success despite negative reviews from the critics. *Gruach* (1921), similar to *King Lear's Wife*, was written as a prelude to a Shakespeare tragedy. The play was performed at the Atheneum Theatre in Glasgow in 1923 and the St. Martin's Theatre in London in 1924.

Bottomley told an interviewer from *Bookman* magazine, "I have no biography. Nothing ever happened to me," and, indeed, he ventured out very little, spending most of his adult life taking pleasure in the paintings and finery that surrounded him. Given the limitations of his physical condition, Bottomley still managed to kindle associations with leading literary figures of the era, including John Drinkwater, Lascelles Abercrombie, and Paul Nash. He also served as president of the Scottish Community Drama Association and vice-president of the British Drama League. Bottomley's last published work was *A Stage for Poetry: My*



Purposes with My Plays (1948), in which he expounded on theatrical concerns and recounted his close associations with two drama teachers, Marjorie Gullan and Duncan Clark.

MAJOR WORKS

Bottomley found inspiration in the literature of the past. Besides Shakespeare, he looked to classical Greek and Roman literature, William Morris, and Oscar Wilde for the material from which he formed his plays. *The Riding to Lithend*, written in 1907 but not produced until 1928, is based on a Norse saga. The hero refuses to join his fellow Icelanders in battle and is ostracized. *Britain's Daughter* (1921) takes place at the height of the Roman Empire. The English heroine defies the invaders and is taken to Rome as a prisoner.

The two plays based on Shakespeare are regarded as Bottomley's finest works. In *King Lear's Wife*, Bottomley portrayed the life and death of Lear's neglected wife Hygd

in a drama rife with betrayal and greed. *Gruach* is the tale of Lady MacBeth before she became Lady MacBeth, at the time in her life when she is about to marry a different Scottish nobleman before the man she is destined to wed finally appears.

Encouraged by Yeats's success, Bottomley wrote a great many short verse plays dealing with the extremes of human experience. He felt the influence of Jacobean drama and Japanese Noh theater, and the resulting dramas are said to contain a sense of history and a moral outlook comparable to what is found in Yeats's verse dramas *The Shadowy Waters* and *Deirdre*.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Critics who read Bottomley's plays tended to appreciate them more than those who saw them performed. William S. Braithwaite described *The Riding to Lithend* as "vigorous with passion and character." Abercrombie called Bottomley "a poet who certainly ought to be better known than he is." On the other hand, the headline of a newspaper review of *King Lear's Wife* called it "a Gifted Mistake."

From a modern perspective, Bottomley's plays are considered poetic successes but dramatic failures. The language is rich and noble, but the characters are not convincing and the plots are not coherent. William V. Spanos described Bottomley as a transitional figure; Bottomley's use of verse cleared the way for later work by the modernists, including T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Some critics have noted that virtually all of Bottomley's protagonists are female. In this, too, he is a transitional figure, but his efforts do not compare favorably with those of George Bernard Shaw in his *Saint Joan* and *Pygmalion*.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

The Mickle Drede and Other Verses (poetry) 1896
Poems at White Nights (poetry) 1899
The Crier by Night (drama) 1902
The Gate of Smaragdus (poetry) 1904
Midsummer Eve (drama) 1905
Chambers of Imagery (poetry) 1907
Laodice and Danaë (drama) 1909
The Riding to Lithend (drama) 1909
A Vision of Giorgione: Three Variations on Venetian Themes (poetry) 1910
Chambers of Imagery, 2nd series (poetry) 1912
King Lear's Wife and Other Plays (dramas) 1920
Gruach and Britain's Daughter: Two Plays (dramas) 1921
Littleholme (poetry) 1922
Prologue (poetry) 1922
Poems of Thirty Years (poetry) 1925
Frescoes from Buried Temples (poetry) 1928

Gordon Bottomley [also published as *Selected Poems*] (poetry) 1928
A Parting and The Return (poetry) 1928
Scenes and Plays (dramas) 1929
Festival Preludes (poetry) 1930
Lyric Plays (dramas) 1932
The Acts of Saint Peter (drama) 1933
Choric Plays and A Comedy (dramas) 1939
Deirdre (drama) 1944
Kate Kennedy (drama) 1945
A Stage for Poetry: My Purposes with My Plays (drama) 1948
Poems and Plays (poetry and dramas) 1953
Poet and Painter, Being the Correspondence of Gordon Bottomley and Paul Nash, 1910-1946 (letters) 1955

CRITICISM

Anna Benneson McMahan (review date 1910)

SOURCE: A review of *A Vision of Giorgione*, in *The Dial*, Vol. XLIX, No. 579, August 1, 1910, p. 69.

[In the following excerpt, McMahan offers a favorable review of *A Vision of Giorgione*.]

[A] beautiful specimen of book-making is Mr. Gordon Bottomley's *A Vision of Giorgione*, which has all the dainty features we have learned to expect in a Mosher book. There is scarcely another painter of equal rank with Giorgione of whom we know so little. Vasari mentions his fondness for music and his love for a lady. This furnishes Mr. Bottomley the inspiration for his sequence of three poems (rather than dramas) called "A Concert of Giorgione," "A Pastoral of Giorgione," and "The Lady of Giorgione." The poet has caught the Venetian atmosphere very perfectly in his charming verse; perhaps he has also caught the secret of the painter's method in a passage such as this:

I pose models no more,
 But find adorable ladies with such fair minds
 They may be trusted to express themselves
 Graciously, perfectly in perfect gowns;
 I ask them to come here quite half in secret,
 Wearing the gowns they think for quiet joy;
 Sometimes I play them music of subtle discords,
 Or tell them casual fragmentary stories
 About the sudden things women do
 Which no man understands. And I watch,
 I paint and watch; they think they are but broidering,
 Or wondering, or resting from their fate.

O. W. Firkins (review date 1916)

SOURCE: A review of *Laodice and Danaë*, in *The Nation*, New York, Vol. 103, No. 2676, October 12, 1916, p. 348.

[In the following excerpt, Firkins reviews *Laodice and Danaë*.]

In *Laodice and Danaë* an Oriental queen of sunken authority kills a maid of honor who has saved her conspiring lover from the penalties of his transgression. Mr. Bottomley takes the homicide very calmly; what excites him is the picturesqueness of the attendant ceremony. What he aims to do is to show fell passions, wrath, revenge, hatred, wandering luxuriously amid arcades, braziers, carpets, divans, unguents, roses, coffers, lamp-chains, brocades, jewels, lattices of cedar, and brodered curtains. This equalization of passion with setting, this pitting of the luxurious against the fiendish, is fairly original, not unimpressive, intensely exotic, and irreparably morbid.

Mr. Bottomley utilizes as instruments a dreamy, sensuous imagination quick to image this delaying, voluptuous, fastidious hate, and a blank verse, which, in spite of inexcusable perversities, I should like to twist into a pastille and burn in a brazier, holding my nostrils to the flame:

Needing me he turned.
Was it not best to die still needing me,
And save the amount of kingdoms for my boy,
The climbing vine of gold up Shushan's front,
The cedar palaces of Ecbatana?
Though Berenice sits in Antioch
Safe with her suckling in her suckling's
name . . .
Winds, bring to me a ship from Antioch.

O. W. Firkins (review date 1922)

SOURCE: A review of *Gruach and Britain's Daughter*, in *The Yale Review*, Vol. XII, No. 1, October, 1922, p. 194.

[In the following excerpt, Firkins reviews *Gruach and Britain's Daughter*.]

Mr. Gordon Bottomley in his early British plays [in *Gruach and Britain's Daughter*] takes us so very far in so short a time that we are surprised to perceive that in a much longer time he has taken us so very little farther. He is shaggy where Mr. Yeats is threadlike, and there is a good growl in his verse, which, however, shows itself less and less susceptible of reduction to a tune. *Britain's Daughter*, the second play, hardly counts, but in *Gruach*, a story of the Shakespearean Macbeths in the pre-Shakespearean moment of their first meeting and almost instant troth-plight, the signals and harbingers of power are as irresistible as ever. *Gruach*, the future Lady Macbeth, is very well indeed as long as she remains a rumor, a contour, and a voice; it is only when she becomes a person that she dwindles. Drama, unfortunately, is rather dependent on persons. But if Mr. Bottomley hardly gets beyond the threshold of drama, few things of our day are better worth while than the impressiveness of his dusky figure as it halts in the gloom of the doorway.

Storm Jameson (review date 1922)

SOURCE: A review of *King Lear's Wife and Other Plays*, in *The Yale Review*, Vol. XI, No. 2, January, 1922, pp. 426-27.

[In the following excerpt, Jameson discusses strengths and weaknesses in *King Lear's Wife*.]

Mr. Gordon Bottomley is . . . a poet. *King Lear's Wife* is a poem, arranged in the form of dramatic dialogue. The verse has a sombre beauty. In the song of Goneril over her dying mother, it has a sharp edge. In such moments as Goneril's scorn of Regan it flashes, suddenly and briefly:

Does Regan worship anywhere at dawn?
The sweaty, half-clad cookmaids render lard
Out in the scullery, after pig-killing,
And Regan sidles among their greasy skirts,
Smeary and hot as they, for chaps to suck.

The speech of all the characters is overburdened with adjectives. They are like the touches of an artist's brush. They are not the natural gestures of the speaker's thoughts. Goneril tells her mother that she "sped as lightly down the dewy bank as any mothering owl that hunts quick mice." Woven in this thread of words, the figures of the lustful King, of Goneril, the fierce young virgin, of Gormflaith, the King's mistress, of the dying Queen, of the child Cordell, who is only a child's voice and a child's hands, are the figures of an old tapestry, angular, stiffly beautiful, clothed in dim colors, fashioned with an ancient cunning. Sometimes the colors blaze as if a shaft of light had fallen across them through a half-open door.

The Lear and Goneril of this play are at once more primitive and infinitely more sophisticated than the Shakespearean conception. When they are primitive they reach back to that Anglo-Saxon mind of rage and lament, childlike in fear and courage, savage in hate and lust. Where they are modern they are subhuman. They stand at the beginning of a road which leads to the monstrous figures of *Petrouchka*, those grotesque, frightful beings who are not dolls but living things below humanity—the maimed, thwarted desires and feelings buried in the human mind, evil, menacing, like words spoken out of a dead and frightful past.

It would be foolish to withhold from Mr. Bottomley the admiration due him. *King Lear's Wife* is full of delicate beauties. It would be impossible not to recognize that these beauties are of a picture and not of a drama. *King Lear's Wife* is not a drama, a tale told "in mimic hour," wrought to a moment of illumination and understanding. It is static, a cloudy vision, a seeming. The Queen, Gormflaith, the King, and Goneril, are at the end what they were at the beginning. There has been no drama, but there have been some poignant moments and also a strange loveliness of words.

Theatre Arts Magazine (review date 1922)

SOURCE: A review of *Gruach and Britain's Daughter*, in *Theatre Arts Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 4, October, 1922, p. 347.

[The following review offers a positive assessment of *Gruach and Britain's Daughter*.]

How large Mr. Bottomley's audience for his verse dramas is going to be, either in the theatre or in the library, will depend largely upon how many there are among the people who have the good fortune to come upon his work who, having visual imagination themselves, enjoy adding it to the imagination of a poet to recreate stories on great and universal tragic themes. Mr. Bottomley's audience must play his plays with him, to make them live. These are distinguished plays, with a strong personal quality, definitely superior to almost all of that mass of contemporary material being added to our stage literature, so much so that it is a temptation to speak extravagantly of them. But it is a greater compliment to Mr. Bottomley not to do that but rather, ranking the plays with the verse dramas that have lived through generations, to say that they are not, for example, Marlowe or Shelley. Perhaps the best method of comparison for this later volume is with Mr. Bottomley's other plays. One may say that *Britain's Daughter* is not so convincing as *Gruach* and that *Gruach*, in spite of its more perfect first act, its fine characterization, its steadier line, both of verse and story, does not do—as a background for *Macbeth*—what *King Lear's Wife* did for *King Lear*. The book is a welcome volume to lovers of the theatre. *Gruach* should be played. It would add lustre to good acting.

Arthur Bryant (review date 1923)

SOURCE: A review of *A Vision of Giorgione*, in *The Bookman*, London, Vol. 64, No. 379, April, 1923, pp. 45.

[In the following excerpt, Bryant reviews *A Vision of Giorgione*.]

These poems of Mr. Bottomley's—stories of Giorgione—were published in a collected edition twelve years ago in America. They now appear for the first time in this country [as *A Vision of Giorgione*]. As the works of Gordon Bottomley they have a passport to any country, but alas! there are no "Cartmell Bells" among them. It is a book of long emotional utterances on music, philosophy and love, but the startling clarity that Mr. Bottomley's admirers have learnt to expect of him is curiously lacking. And the use of expressions such as "perfection comes but once" gives one to think furiously; Jove nods outrageously sometimes.

Occasionally the old spark lights. At the beginning there is a charming dedication to his wife:

Where all is yours,
What virtue hes in giving?

Though nought endures,
In writing as in living
I have given myself to you,
And, as you take me,
My poems grow more true,
More true you make me.

That, I think, is the best thing in the book. If I seem a little hard on this collection it is because I am forced to judge the man, who wrote the great dedication to "some English ironmoulders," by a very high standard—the highest there is.

C. Henry Warren (essay date 1925)

SOURCE: "The Poetry of Mr. Gordon Bottomley," in *The Bookman*, London, Vol. 68, No. 405, June, 1925, p. 176.

[In the following essay, Warren reviews *Poems of Thirty Years*.]

Perhaps one of the best known of Mr. Bottomley's poems is "The End of the World." In frozen phrases, light as the flakes that drift down from the closing sky, it pictures the desolation of the End. The cow-house where hitherto the snow had always melted "with yellow stains from the beasts' breath inside," is quite thatched over now; the snow slides from the over-weighted leaves (or is it a dead bird falling?); inside the house the clock has stopped and a butterfly drops from the ceiling's shadow, dead; the rails of a broken bed lie charred in the grate:

And when he touched the bars he thought the sting
Came from their heat—he could not feel such cold.
She said, "Oh, do not sleep,
Heart, heart of me, keep near me! No, no; sleep!
I will not lift his fallen quiet eyelids,
Although I know he would awaken then—
He closed them thus but now of his own will
He can stay with me while I do not lift them."

I have purposely recalled this poem in some detail because it seems to me typical of the whole of Mr. Bottomley's work. The quietness of its rhythm, the deftness of its pictures, its mournful remoteness—all are typical of that dream world whereof his poems treat. It is a world set apart from this world of ours that is so bathed in the light of common day. There move those ladies of old time, Helen and Bathsheba, Cassandra and Rosamund; and there too are David and King Avelin, Moses and Hadrian. There the apple trees bloom endlessly against a dewy sky; and there in the cloudy turrets are bells that ring out soft and clear. It is a static world, shut in an iridescent bubble; or a gorgeous frieze in a mighty circular room; or a world of ice and flame, marvellously carved, marvellously twining.

For Mr. Bottomley (save in the successful exception of "To Ironfounders and Others") holds aloof from our soiled and turbulent days. His mind is truly its own resting-place. He is the cloistered poet. It is enough for him that,

out of the storied past, he can fetch beauty and fashion it for our inspiration. He is the craftsman of the immaculate word and the immaculate phrase, chiselling his poems endlessly (so it seems to me), and carving his pictures with endless care. Not that the labour behind his work is too evident; like the studied prose of "Elia" (that has been aptly described as seeming but the overflow of good talk), it hides its abundant technique under the graceful ease of inevitability.

Yet although Mr. Bottomley is the cloistered poet, he has had a most considerable influence upon modern verse. In him there is a strange union between the last century and the present one. Two of his books were called *Chambers of Imagery*; and they almost founded a school. They took as their unit the dexterous phrase, the pure-drawn image; and in pictures, as meticulously hammered as Francis Thompson's snowflake, they envisioned some delicate emotion, some hesitant sentiment for our delight. Here, in a poem called "Sanctuaries," is an instance:

There is a chamber in the dawn
Sought by a bird alone—
A cloud, a gleam, a veil withdrawn
On brighter veils beyond,
Glistening with one far ringing tone,
One fluttering mote and blond.
There is a chamber in the night
Sought by a girl alone—
A secret place, white after white,
With inner walls more dim,
And farther places whitely strown
As though with thoughts that swim.

He is modern also in the intellectual content of his verse; and his shy paganism belongs utterly to our time. For all that, however, there are poems that reach back in this book to a day that is now over-past. Such particularly are the quasi-dramatic poems like "Kassandra Prophecies" and "Solomon's Parents." From this strange marriage in his poetry of the past with the present springs a queer paradox. I feel in reading him to-day that I am thrown beyond the experimental and feverish tendencies of the "Georgians" into a statelier and less querulous time; yet I feel also that I am in the presence of one entirely sympathetic with our present yearnings and indeed a participant in them. Perhaps this is due to the fact that apparently Mr. Bottomley has enjoyed the friendship of so many of our "younger" moderns; or perhaps he has that best gift of never growing with the years.

This beautifully produced volume [*Poems of Thirty Years*] seems to represent all of Mr. Bottomley's lyrical output to date; or at least all that part of it he is anxious to preserve. Here is the lovely "New Year's Eve, 1913," from which, for its own sake and for the personal joy I have in it (since it was by this poem, in *An Annual of New Poetry*, 1917, that Mr. Bottomley first swam triumphantly into my ken), there comes a double pleasure in quotation:

O, Cartmel bells ring soft to-night,
And Cartmel bells ring clear,

But I lie far away to-night,
Listening with my dear . . .

The loveliness, the fruitfulness,
The power of life lived there
Return, revive, more closely press
Upon that midnight air.

But many deaths have place in men
Before they come to die;
Joys must be used and spent, and then
Abandoned and passed by.

Earth is not ours; no cherished space
Can hold us from life's flow,
That bears us thither and thence by ways
We knew not we should go.

O, Cartmel bells ring loud, ring clear,
Through midnight deep and hoar,
A year new-born, and I shall hear
The Cartmel bells no more.

Here you will find those dew-drenched and moonlit poems of apple-orchard days, poems joy-worn and weighed down with their own loveliness; here you will find that clean-cut and alien poem, "Babel: The Gate of the God," where "the orgulous king Nimroud stands up conceiving he shall live to conquer God," and where words lose themselves in inarticulate gasps reaching out to "curves of immortal thought"; here you will find again those three majestic Hymns to Touch, Form and Imagination:

Imagination is acceptance wrought
When things beyond ourselves with faint sounds press
Upon the limits of our consciousness;

and here too you will find all the songs out of Mr. Bottomley's several poetic plays—not forgetting that sardonic realist song, from *King Lear's Wife*:

A louse crept out of my lady's shift—
Ahumm, Ahumm, Ahee.

I do not know, when historians come to reckon up the poetry of our day, with what date they will mark the coming in of Georgian poetry; but it is a most heartening thought that they cannot exclude Mr. Bottomley from their count. Mr. Hardy we must grudgingly forgo; and the Poet Laureate. But Mr. Bottomley (though the earliest of his poetry here dates back to 1896) is certainly ours. The thought is a comforting one.

Hoxie Neale Fairchild (essay date 1962)

SOURCE: "More Mavericks," in *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, Vol. V: 1880-1920, *Gods of a Changing Poetry*, Columbia University Press, 1962, pp. 306-311.

[In the following excerpt, Fairchild discusses major themes and ideas in Bottomley's poetry.]

Born in 1874, Gordon Bottomley published two immature and derivative volumes of verse in the nineties, the first depending mainly on Rossetti and the second mainly on Yeats. In *The Gate of Smaragdus* (1904) he began to walk alone, and in *Chambers of Imagery* (1907) he emerged as his uneven, restlessly searching true self. But by 1912, when a second series of *Chambers* appeared, he had already begun to devote himself chiefly though not exclusively to verse dramas which treated legendary tragic themes with a harshly primitive realism which some people found rather shocking. Such readers preferred the impressionistic incantatory lyrics in which he emulated and sometimes rivaled De la Mare, or the more numerous nature poems which exhibited an almost Wordsworthian simplicity, directness, and economy. On the whole, however, he never won much fame with the general public although he was respected by many of his fellow poets. A chronic invalid whose life often hung by a thread, he was no less unable than temperamentally disinclined to bustle about in the literary market place or to attach himself to a coterie.

In 1925 he asserts that his "most cherished pilgrimage" has been "The quest of beauty by word and sound."¹ His maturer work, however, frequently implies a more intellectualized, less trivially sensuous conception of poetry than that which he had cultivated in the nineties. Not enough attention, in fact, has been paid to his more seriously reflective nondramatic poems. After reading De la Mare it is refreshing to turn to a poet who so often wants to use his brains. He dislikes the world in which he lives no less intensely than De la Mare, but except in occasional fantasy-vacations he shows no disposition to shrink from it into dreamland. Sometimes more aggressively loyal to the romantic faith than De la Mare, at other times he can be sharply critical of it. Neither an escapist nor a pseudoreal-ist of the Gibson type, he aspires to be a poet of *intellectual* engagement. But the technical problems involved in this endeavor are not satisfactorily solved. The poems in question show an extremely modern mind seething uncomfortably within the confines of traditional forms. The struggle to discover and express ideas without lecturing about them too often results in a contorted, incoherent style. Nevertheless the ambition is honorable and the achievement at least interesting.

In "The Embarkation," the way in which the limited land ends and the limitless sea begins *just here* raises the question of what may lie beyond. The speaker will seek an answer:

Let me enlarge my world and know what verge
Escapes this mass of earth for balance thrown:

Embark, my heart: the lip of all the land
Is under flamelets that outlive the dark;
Lost figures with white vacant faces stand,
Hand moves to hidden hand;
Rope slips; the near thwart sinks . . . My heart, em-
bark.²

Here as sometimes elsewhere, Bottomley is ambiguous. Is this *Crossing the Bar* or *Ulysses*? The voyage from mortal

to immortal life or the onward drive of creative imagination into a romantically conceived infinitude? In either case we may infer that the wisdom sought by Bottomley must offer not only intellectual but spiritual satisfaction. Mere pagan humanism, as he makes Hadrian confess while musing over the dead body of Antinous, is good but not good enough. On the other hand, this religious-minded poet is also a skeptic. "Gods live but in their worshippers" is the theme of "A Passing of Faith." The god Set, being of course bull-headed, insists that Christ has not conquered *him*; but the other gods of the Egyptian pantheon tell him that he and they are dead simply because no one now believes in them.³ The implication is that Christianity will not prove exempt from the same principle.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, however, this son of a devout Swedenborgian father knows that Christianity is still very much alive. Although he rejects it he pays it the compliment of taking it seriously. That he draws the usual contrast between Christ and the Christian creed is to be expected. More interesting are the paradoxes of "In Church," a more aggressive version of Cory's *Mimnermus*. While

The priest, in thoughtless daily use,
Delivered the fairy tale of Eve,

the poet gave a fresh twist to the *felix culpa* theme:

I thanked the God for all the joy
Ordained for me by Eve's best sin:
Except for God she might have been
Stainless and ever a garden-toy.

And hearing the parable of the sower,

Yet most I praised the stony soil
That did so rare and great a thing,
Spending its power to serve its King
Unmasked by man's officious toil.

At times he seems engaged in a systematic attempt to naturalize the "fairy tales" of Christianity. Moses, soliloquizing in *Sinai*, says that his power over men lies not in his knowledge of God but in his knowledge of nature. His miracles are those of science:

I understand how water stratifies:
Smiting, I change the balance of its force.

By calling his scientific knowledge "God," he can impose his will upon men who do not yet realize that such knowledge, regarded simply as what it is, would give not enslavement but freedom and mastery.⁴

In a lighter, more sophisticated vein not unlike that of Anatole France, he amuses himself with David and Bathsheba and with Abishag as the consolation of David's senility. But these poems are preceded, and in a sense prepared for, by "Rosamund Grief," a searchingly serious study of pious erotomania in which a modern girl bereaved of her lover adopts with insane literalness the illusion of being