

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC

18

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series

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

If the author's death date is:

You should turn to:

After Dec. 31, 1959
(or author is still living)

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM

for example: Jorge Luis Borges, Anthony Burgess,
William Faulkner, Mary Gordon,
Ernest Hemingway, Iris Murdoch

1900 through 1959

TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM

for example: Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald,
Henry James, Mark Twain, Virginia Woolf

1800 through 1899

NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE CRITICISM

for example: Fedor Dostoevski, George Sand,
Gerard Manley Hopkins, Emily Dickinson

1400 through 1799

***LITERATURE CRITICISM FROM 1400 TO 1800
(excluding Shakespeare)***

for example: Anne Bradstreet, Pierre Corneille,
Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope,
Jonathan Swift, Phillis Wheatley

SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM

Shakespeare's plays and poetry

Antiquity through 1399

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the Beowulf poet

(Volume 1 forthcoming)

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This two-volume set presents criticism on
contemporary authors writing on current issues.
Topics covered include the social sciences,
philosophy, economics, natural science, law, and
related areas.

Volume 18

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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

**Dennis Poupard
James E. Person, Jr.
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**Gale Research Company
Book Tower
Detroit, Michigan 48226**

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Preface

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

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

Scope of the Series

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

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

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

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

An author may appear more than once in the series because of the great quantity of critical material available, or because of a resurgence of criticism generated by events such as an author's centennial or anniversary celebration, the republication of an author's works, or the publication of a newly translated work or volume of letters. Generally, a few author entries in each volume of *TCLC* feature criticism on single works by major authors who have appeared previously in the series. Only those individual works that have been the subjects of vast amounts of criticism and are widely studied in literature classes are selected for this in-depth treatment. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is the subject of such an entry in *TCLC*, Volume 18.

Organization of the Book

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

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

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

Cumulative Indexes

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

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

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

Acknowledgments

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

Suggestions Are Welcome

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

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

Authors to Be Featured in *TCLC*, Volumes 19 and 20

James Agee (American novelist and journalist)—Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and *A Death in the Family* are harshly realistic treatments of the moral crises and moral triumphs of mid-twentieth-century America. In addition, Agee's film criticism is recognized as the first serious consideration in English of film as a modern art form.

Arnold Bennett (English novelist)—Bennett is credited with introducing techniques of European Naturalism to the English novel. Set in the manufacturing district of the author's native Staffordshire, Bennett's novels tell of the thwarted ambitions of those who endure a dull, provincial existence.

Hermann Broch (Austrian novelist, poet, and essayist)—Broch was a philosophical novelist whose works are considered profound reflections upon the social and moral disintegration of modern Europe. His major works, which include his masterpiece *The Sleepwalkers*, have been compared to James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* for their contribution to the Modernist exploration of language.

Jacques Futrelle (American novelist and short story writer)—Futrelle was the author of detective stories featuring Professor S. F. X. Van Dusen, also known as the Thinking Machine. A detective who utilized the classic deductive method pioneered by Arthur Conan Doyle's legendary detective Sherlock Holmes, the Thinking Machine is considered one of the most brilliant and bizarre heroes in the field of detective fiction.

Robert Cunninghame Graham (Scottish fiction writer, travel writer, and historian)—Called "the most singular of English writers" by the novelist W. H. Hudson, Cunninghame Graham was a world traveler, a socialist member of Parliament, and a friend of such authors as Joseph Conrad and George Bernard Shaw. Cunninghame Graham's works, both fiction and nonfiction, are based on the often dramatic experiences of his life.

John Gray (English poet and fiction writer)—Reputed to be the model for the title character of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Gray is best known for his poetry collection *Silverpoints*, which is often considered one of the high-points of Decadent verse during the 1890s. His futuristic novel *Park: A Fantastic Story* has recently been reissued.

O. Henry (American short story writer)—O. Henry (William Sydney Porter) was one of America's most popular short story writers. His stories, known for their inventiveness and characteristic surprise endings, are widely anthologized and often compared to the works of Guy de Maupassant.

Julia Ward Howe (American poet and biographer)—A famous suffragette and social reformer, Howe was also a popular poet who is best known as the composer of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

T. E. Hulme (English poet)—A major influence on the work of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and other important twentieth-century poets, Hulme was the chief theorist of Imagism and Modernism in English poetry.

James Weldon Johnson (American novelist and poet)—One of the most prominent black public figures of his time, Johnson is also regarded as the principal forerunner of the Harlem Renaissance. His novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* was one of the first works of fiction to explore the complexity of race relations in America and profoundly influenced such writers as Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright.

Lionel Johnson (English poet and critic)—Johnson is considered one of the most important figures associated with the Decadent and Aesthetic movements of the 1890s. Like many of his contemporaries, he lived an eccentric life and died young, producing a small but distinguished body of works that reflect his most personal preoccupations while also representing many of the typical concerns of his generation.

Sheila Kaye-Smith (English novelist)—Kaye-Smith is best known for her novels of the Sussex countryside. Often compared to Thomas Hardy's Wessex novels, the works of Kaye-Smith also portray strong-willed male and female characters who demonstrate the natural vitality of an agrarian way of life.

Ludwig Lewisohn (American novelist and critic)—An important man of letters during the first quarter of the twentieth century, Lewisohn made a notable contribution to modern literature through his critical writings and his translations from German and French literature. Many of Lewisohn's later works of fiction and nonfiction reflect his concern for the plight of European Jews during the 1930s and 1940s.

Horacio Quiroga (Uruguayan short story writer)—Represented in an English translation by the recently published *Decapitated Chicken, and Other Stories*, Quiroga's tales of death and madness in the jungles of South America reflect the influence of Edgar Allan Poe as well as the sensational tragedies of Quiroga's own life.

Rainer Maria Rilke (German poet and novelist)—Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, a loosely autobiographical novel that explores the angst-ridden life of a hypersensitive man in Paris, is considered the author's most accomplished prose work. To mark a new translation of this novel, *TCLC* will devote an entire entry to critical discussion of this important work.

Jacques Roumain (Haitian novelist, poet, and essayist)—One of the most militant and influential Haitian intellectuals of this century, Roumain was the author of the novel *Masters of the Dew*, which was widely praised for its haunting stylistic beauty as well as its powerful social message.

Raymond Roussel (French novelist and dramatist)—Roussel was a wealthy eccentric who staged expensive but entirely unsuccessful productions of his own plays and published elaborate but ignored editions of his novels. He was claimed as a forerunner by the Surrealists for the extravagant and often shocking imagination demonstrated in his works and is today recognized as one of the oddest and most ingenious authors in modern literature.

John Ruskin (English critic)—Most renowned for his critical writings on art and architecture, particularly *Stones of Venice* and the five-volume series *Modern Painters*, Ruskin was also an important social critic. His advocacy of various reforms and his association with the Pre-Raphaelite circle of artists, writers, and thinkers place him at the intellectual and cultural center of Victorian England.

Lincoln Steffens (American journalist and autobiographer)—Steffens was one of a group of writers in the early twentieth century who were described as “muckrakers” by President Theodore Roosevelt. Steffens’s call for radical reforms in American government and society forms the substance of his best works, including *The Shame of the Cities* and *The Struggle for Self Government*, and serves as the background to his highly readable *Autobiography*.

Mark Twain (American novelist)—Twain is considered by many to be the father of modern American literature. Breaking with the genteel literary conventions of the nineteenth century, Twain endowed his characters and narratives with the natural speech patterns of the common person and wrote about subjects hitherto believed beneath the consideration of serious art. He is renowned throughout the world for his greatest novel, *Huckleberry Finn*. *TCLC* will devote an entry solely to critical discussion of that controversial work. Included will be works of criticism written from the late nineteenth century through 1985, the centenary year of *Huckleberry Finn*’s American publication and the one hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Twain’s birth.

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

H. G. Wells (English novelist)—Wells is best known today as one of the forerunners of modern science fiction and as a utopian idealist who foretold an era of chemical warfare, atomic weaponry, and world wars. *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and several other works among Wells’s canon are considered classics in the genres of science fiction and science fantasy. *TCLC* will devote an entire entry to Wells’s accomplishments as a science fiction writer.

Owen Wister (American novelist)—Considered the founder of modern fiction about the Old West, Wister is best known as the author of *The Virginian*, a novel that established the basic character types, settings, and plots of the Western genre.

Virginia Woolf (English novelist)—Woolf is one of the most important English novelists of the twentieth century. *Mrs. Dalloway* is perhaps the most frequently studied of her novels and a landmark work in the history of modern fiction for its use of the literary device known as stream of consciousness. *TCLC* will devote an entire entry to this important work.

Emile Zola (French novelist, dramatist, and critic)—Zola was the founder and principal theorist of Naturalism, perhaps the most influential literary movement in modern literature. His twenty-volume series *Les Rougon-Macquart* is one of the monuments of Naturalist fiction, and served as a model for late nineteenth-century novelists seeking a more candid and accurate representation of human life.

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 Spengler, Oswald 1880-1936
 Squire, J(ohn) C(ollings) 1884-1958
 Stavenhagen, Fritz 1876-1906
 Stockton, Frank R. 1834-1902
 Subrahmanya Bharati, C. 1882-1921
 Sully-Prudhomme, Rene 1839-1907
 Talev, Dimitov 1898-1966
 Thoma, Ludwig 1867-1927
 Trotsky, Leon 1870-1940
 Tuchmann, Jules 1830-1901
 Turner, W(alter) J(ames) R(edfern) 1889-1946

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

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

(Joseph) Hilaire (Pierre Sébastien René Swanton) Belloc

1870-1953

French-born English poet, essayist, travel writer, biographer, critic, historian, journalist, and novelist.

Belloc is considered one of the most controversial and accomplished men of letters of early twentieth-century England. An author whose writings continue to draw either the deep admiration or bitter contempt of readers, he was an outspoken proponent of radical social and economic reforms, all grounded in his vision of Europe as a "Catholic society." Although many critics have attacked Belloc's prescriptive polemical works for their tone of truculence and intolerance—and, especially, for recurrent elements of anti-Semitism—they have also joined in praise of his humor and poetic skill, hailing Belloc as the greatest English writer of light verse since Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear.

The son of a wealthy French father and English mother, Belloc was born in La Celle St. Cloud, France, a few days before the Franco-Prussian War broke out. The family fled to England at the news of the French army's collapse, returning after the war's end to discover that the Belloc home had been looted and vandalized by Prussian soldiers. Although the estate was eventually restored and made habitable, the evidence of destruction witnessed by Belloc's parents and later recounted to their children made a deep impression on Hilaire; throughout his life and through the two world wars, he habitually referred to Germany as "Prussia" and considered the "Prussians" a barbaric people worthy only of utter contempt. After the death of Belloc's father in 1872, the family again took up residence in England, where Belloc was raised and received a Catholic education, notably at Cardinal John Henry Newman's Oratory School near Birmingham, where he won many academic prizes and came to the attention of Newman himself. From his numerous travels between England and France, Belloc acquired a deep interest in history, polemics, and world literature. After serving for a year in a French artillery unit (he retained his French citizenship until 1902), Belloc continued his studies at Balliol College, Oxford, where he gained a reputation as a brilliant student, a skilled debater, and an aggressively outspoken champion of Roman Catholicism. Prejudice against Belloc's Catholicism led to his being rejected in his bid for a history fellowship, an experience that intensely embittered him. Through this rejection Belloc came to hate university dons in general, later directing many satiric attacks against them, portraying them as the smug, pretentious defenders of privilege. Years after his disappointment at Oxford, at the age of sixty-six Belloc wrote: "Oxford is for me a shrine, a memory, a tomb, and a poignant possessing grief. All would have been well if they would have received me."

By the mid-1890s Belloc had married and, through the influence of his sister Marie Belloc Lowndes, begun writing for various London newspapers and magazines. His first book, *Verses and Sonnets*, appeared in 1896, followed by *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts*, which satirized moralistic verse for children and proved immensely popular. Illustrated with superb complementary effect by Belloc's friend Basil T. Blackwood, *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts*, according to critics, contains much of the author's best light verse, as do such later collec-



The Granger Collection, New York

tions as *More Beasts (for Worse Children)*, *The Modern Traveller*, and *Cautionary Tales for Children*. An impulsive man who seldom lived in any one place for more than a few weeks and whose frequent trips to the continent proved a constant drain on his financial resources, Belloc welcomed the popular success of his verse collections. But, embracing Cardinal Edward Henry Manning's dictum that "all human conflict is ultimately theological," he perceived his primary role as that of polemicist and reformer, whose every work must reflect his desire for Europe's spiritual, social, and political return to its monarchist, Catholic heritage. Belloc's career as an advocate of Catholicism first attracted wide public attention in 1902 with *The Path to Rome*, perhaps his most famous single book, in which he recorded the thoughts and impressions that came to him during a walking trip through France and Italy to Rome. In addition to its infusion of Catholic thought, the work contains what later became acknowledged as typically Bellocian elements: rich, earthy humor; an eye for natural beauty; and a meditative spirit—all of which appear in the author's later travel books, which include *Esto Perpetua*, *The Four Men*, and *The Cruise of the "Nona."*

The period between the century's turn and the mid-1920s was the time of Belloc's widest fame and influence. Throughout these years Belloc's name and reputation were frequently linked in the public mind with G. K. Chesterton, whom Belloc had

met around 1900 when each was a contributor to the radical journal the *Speaker*. In Chesterton, Belloc found a talented illustrator of his books, a friend, and a man who shared and publicly advocated many of his own religious and political views. Anti-industrial and antimodern in much of their advocacy, the two were jointly caricatured in print by George Bernard Shaw as "the Chesterbelloc," an absurd pantomime beast of elephantine appearance and outmoded beliefs. Both, according to Shaw and other adverse critics, had a passion for lost causes. Belloc and Chesterton were "Little Englanders"—opposed to British colonialism and imperialism—whose essays in the *Speaker* had infuriated many Londoners by the authors' opposition to Britain's imperial designs on South Africa and the nation's participation in the Boer War. Each looked to the Middle Ages as an era of spiritual and material fulfillment when Europe was united in Catholicism and small landowners worked their own, Church-allotted parcels of property, providing for their own individual needs, free from both the wage-slavery that later developed under capitalism and the confiscatory taxation and collectivist policies of state socialism. (Belloc in particular, after serving for several years as a Liberal M.P. in the House of Commons, held a cynical view of the modern British political system, seeing little difference in the methods of the government's Liberal and Conservative ministers, who were often, to his disgust, fellow clubmen and the closest of friends outside the halls of Parliament.) As an alternative both to capitalism and to the Fabian socialism advanced by such contemporaries as Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Belloc propounded an economic and political program called Distributism, a system of small landholding which harks back to Europe's pre-Reformation history. This system was outlined in the 1891 Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and is fully described in Belloc's controversial essay *The Servile State*, published in 1912. In this work, which attacks both capitalism (which produces the "servile state" of wage-slavery) and socialism, Belloc called for a return to familial self-sufficiency through the widespread restoration of private property; according to his prescription, which has been described by many critics as at best quaint, and at worst ridiculously impractical, every family should own three acres and a cow. "The fundamental position of *The Servile State*," A. N. Wilson has explained, "is this; that an Irish peasant who earns almost no money but owns his own land, burns his own peat, grows his own potatoes and milks his own cow is a freer creature than a clerk or factory hand who might earn ten times more money, but is compelled to work for someone else, and to live in a rented or leased house, and to be dependent on shopkeepers for his sustenance."

The Chesterbelloc's political ideas were also expounded in the *Eye Witness*, a weekly political and literary journal edited by Belloc, which became one of the most widely read periodicals in pre-war England. Belloc attracted as contributors such distinguished authors as Shaw, Wells, Maurice Baring, and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. In addition, he and his subeditor, Cecil Chesterton, involved the *Eye Witness* in a political uproar in 1912 when they uncovered the Marconi Scandal, in which several prominent government officials used confidential information concerning impending international business contracts in order to speculate in the stock of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company. Although Belloc continued to contribute articles and occasionally edit the periodical, the *Eye Witness* eventually passed to Cecil Chesterton's editorship as the *New Witness*, which, after Cecil's death in World War I, came under his brother's supervision, becoming in 1925 *G. K.'s Weekly*, the principal organ of the Distributist League. By then, Belloc

had established himself as a polemicist who could write forceful and convincing essays on nearly any subject, in a prose style marked by clarity and wit. His reputation as a polemicist reached its zenith in 1926 when, in *A Companion to Mr. Wells's "Outline of History,"* he attacked his longtime opponent's popular book as a simpleminded, nonscientific, anti-Catholic document. A war of mutual refutation ensued, fought by both writers in the pages of several books and essays. Ironically, although much of the scientific community now affirms Wells's biological theses as presented in the *Outline*, during the 1920s the preponderance of evidence supported the findings of Belloc, who, in the minds of some observers, bested Wells in their exchange of polemical broadsides.

But his exchange with Wells was Belloc's last major triumph as a man of letters, as throughout the 1920s and 1930s his own ideas were increasingly brushed aside by a public uninterested in seeing Britain return to Catholic values and medieval social structures. Further, in light of the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini in Europe, a growing number of readers were offended by Belloc's casual use of anti-Semitic remarks in his works and his view of Mussolini as one of Europe's great warrior-kings reborn. In 1936, with Chesterton ill and near death and with Belloc performing much of the editorial work for *G. K.'s Weekly*, the periodical became one of the very few English journals of opinion to applaud Fascist Italy's one-sided military victory over Abyssinia (Ethiopia)—an editorial position which further tarred Belloc's reputation. Embittered that his opinions were no longer taken seriously and that his creative gifts were diminishing, Belloc spent the last years of his career writing histories and biographies, which have been described by Wilfrid Sheed as "a ream of unsound, unresearched history books blatantly taking the Catholic side of everything." In the early 1940s, after authoring over 150 books, Belloc was forced into retirement by age and a series of strokes. He spent the last ten years of his life in quiet retirement at his longtime home in rural Sussex, King's Land, dying in 1953.

Recent biographical and critical studies have revealed Belloc to be a much more complex and intriguing figure than the predictable, anti-Semitic crank portrayed by critics during his lifetime and the years immediately following. As a man, and particularly as a polemicist, he fought tenaciously to uphold his own conceptions of truth; as Michael H. Markel has described Belloc and his polemical style: "He was never modulated, restrained and understated. When he chose an enemy, he fought completely, with all the weapons he could find. Until the enemy was not only disarmed but conquered, Belloc pressed the attack." He held strong passions and strong hatreds, being at once a monarchist and an ardent admirer of the French Revolution in all its excesses, an insistent Catholic apologist and a man who could refer to Jesus as "a milksop" and the Bible as "a pack of lies," a man who expressed sympathy for Europe's Jews and outrage over the Holocaust, yet sprinkled his correspondence and published works with derisive references to "the Yids." As for this last matter, Belloc's reputation as an anti-Semitic hatemonger rests largely upon his book *The Jews*, published in 1922. In this work, Belloc warned that there existed in post-World War I Europe a "Jewish problem"—tension and mistrust between the Jewish minority and the suspicious, predominantly Gentile population—and that to ignore this tension would lead to an anti-Semitic persecution such as the world had never seen. But to even acknowledge that such tensions existed was itself considered an act of bigotry, and *The Jews*, then as now, went largely unread, being generally