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Brief Candle

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not the sensibilities of a boy of twelve—an objection which on the surface might appear to be mere carping.

The poet at the level of apprehension is not much concerned with “the rhythm of life”; his concern is his intuitions about life. He imposes his own rhythm, a formular one, the rhythm of his medium, poetry. His is even a suspensive art to the degree that he progresses by splitting apart the emotion from the experience in which it is contained. He tends to abstract where the novelist tends to only sympathize. The novelist can ill afford poetic abstraction and still preserve that correspondence between his creation and the pattern of life as we know it, that “solidity of specification” which Henry James called the inspiration, despair, reward, torment, and delight of the novelist. He can ill afford to let symbols become their own excuse for being in his composition. This would be extreme romancing, as destructive in its way as the extremes of naturalism in theirs.

The conclusion appears to me unavoidable that the writer who carries his symbolism too far creates at most lifeless parable; equally unavoidable, that the writer who concerns himself solely with swaths of fact creates only case histories. There is a middle channel down which the finest novels sail: such recent works as *The Gallery, 1984, The Heart of the Matter, The Track of the Cat, and The Brave Bulls*. To appreciate them is to appreciate a truth on which they depend, that the romancer, if his work would have richness, must focus his vision in a clear-eyed perception of the solid specifications of reality, that the naturalist, to be likewise successful, must grant his land-locked gaze the mariner’s freedom, who steers by both reef and star.

Brief Candle

By Claude F. Koch

The children dance from school; behold, their sun
 Has crossed its nadir and their clock is stopped
 At joy. Their spring unwinds its hours,
 But no time from out each gay face lours.
 Their year is always noon, and no alarm
 Dropped from all the calculating world’s bell towers
 Dare second harm upon these sons of ours;
 No tick shall irritate the minute heart,
 And daylight saving is the standard watch
 Apart from us they keep. Oh, we make much
 Of sun and time, behold these sons eclipsing everyone
 In brightness like the sun,
 And, unlike time, in fun.