

tion of the frustration women feel in trying to live their lives in what is still essentially a male dominated world. But I suspect that this is too personal a view of the situation.

For whatever reason, violence has become the primary reality of the twentieth century. It is an age in which people feel that life is too complicated, too dense, too other for the more human and humane kinds of response. In a world of incredible and undeniable complication, a world so complicated that it appears to be nothing more than an elaborate series of interconnecting plots, one's only response is some kind of violence. These three writers have more or less successfully contained their violence by giving it literary expression. The subsequent suicide of Sylvia Plath after containing some of her irrational energies in her novel and poems suggests all too vividly the fragility of this literary resolution. Critics have said of one or another of these writers that their violence is in their own heads. I am not exactly sure what these critics mean. It appears to represent some attempt to discredit their literary versions of modern experience. They may have violence on their minds, but then again so do we all. This may be a disturbing fact, but then again so is life.

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LUBELSKIE MATERIAŁY NEOFILOLOGICZNE—1975

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Ivy Compton-Burnett.

Ivy Compton-Burnett began to publish in 1914 with "Dolores", which is regarded as her juvenile work since the technique found here /the novel contains more narrative than dialogue/ differs considerably from that of the later books.

With Pastors and Masters 1925/ her mature style is already formed and remains unchanged in its essentials in the seventeen dialogue novels that have followed.

Everything in her novels is said to take place between 1888- 1900.² The critics' opinion is in most cases based only on Ivy Compton-Burnett's statement that she has no real or organic knowledge of life later than about 1910.³ The social relationships in her novels, however, tend to reveal the late Victorian epoch.

A basic pattern of her novels is easily detectable, since it is repeated in each of them with slight variations. Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels are concerned with relationships between individuals in English middle class families. In most of them there is usually a tyrant, either male or female, upon whom the other members of the family depend. "The desire for domination, which in a dictator can plunge the world into misery, can here be studied in a limited sphere. The family tyrant is as evil as the dictator and ethically far less easily defensible."⁴ The tension leads inevitably to a violent climax which is often a murder committed with the object of changing a situation intolerable to the murderer. There are not only tyrants and victims in Compton-Burnett's novels but also witnesses /these are most often the servants or the relatives of the families / who provide courtroom-like comments on what is going on within the family circles. Farcical, matricide, incest, forgery, mental cruelty - the worst of which human

nature is capable - are examined in the novels devoid of poetic justice. This is one of her sharpest breaks with tradition that the less scrupulous come off best at the end of the book and the good are resigned being what they are."⁶

The novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett have been assigned a position of the first rank in modern fiction mainly by virtue of their technical interest. The technical aspect of her writing is at the centre of the critics' attention. The Compton-Burnett's novels are unlike the work of other novelists. They are ninety per cent dialogue which gives the measure of space devoted to the narrative component. Description of scenery, of rooms, of characters and their movements is reduced to the absolute minimum and "hardly amounts to more than one expects to find in the stage directions of a play."⁷

The characters describe and betray themselves by what they say since "Compton-Burnett, the most impersonal of narrators does not comment. She lets them speak and records their comments with the impartiality of a tape recorder." The characters' dialogues are sometimes said to be stylized and thus criticized as highly artificial. Robert Liddel takes pains to prove that there are simple characters in Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels whose speech is not stylized, and that sometimes the utterances of the characters are nearer to or identical with those of "real life". It is clear that some critics have failed to understand that these "stylized" conversations are part of Ivy Compton-Burnett's novelistic convention, and that any criticism directed against them on the basis that they do not resemble the dialogues heard in the empirical world, cannot be regarded as serious. The witty dialogues, as in plays, reveal the nature of the speakers and one has to deduce characteristics that are hidden behind them.

Ivy Compton-Burnett's critics agree that due to this kind of technique her novels approach drama.¹⁰

In her conversation with Michael Willigate Ivy Compton-Burnett says: "I think that I should call my novels something between a novel and a play, and I feel that the form suits me better than the pure play. It gives me more range and a little more length, and it doesn't subject me to the mechanical restrictions of a play."¹¹

Most of the critics have focused their attention on the interpersonal relations within the family circles which they examine in detail.¹²

Some of them, however, concentrate on some other aspects of Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels. Jim Preston's Linguistic analysis in his comments on "A Heritage and its History"¹³ and Nathalie Sarraute's theories on the function of dialogue in present and future fiction may serve here as examples of this approach.¹⁴ These two critics stress

that the dialogues in Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels operate on two levels - "of what is said and what is all the louder for not being said."¹⁵ In other words, these are the levels of conversation and sub-conversation.

Ivy Compton-Burnett's critics lean to comparisons and suggest a likeness of her work to the novels of Jane Austen,¹⁶ of Henry James,¹⁷ of George Eliot,¹⁸ and Elizabeth Gaskell¹⁹ - to mention but a few.

Though most critics disagree with Liddel's claim that "of all novelists now writing she is the greatest", nearly all of them are of the opinion that Ivy Compton-Burnett stands out from among the others by virtue of her striking originality.²⁰ There are no critics who find that, as Ivy Compton-Burnett once said: "if you pick up a Compton-Burnett, it is difficult not to put it down again."²¹

NOTES

1. "Pastors and Masters" /1925/, "Brothers and Sisters" /1929/, "Men and Wives" /1931/, "More Women than Men" /1933/, "A House and its Head" /1933/, "Daughters and Sons" /1937/, "A Family and a Fortune" /1939/, "Parents and Children" /1941/ "Elders and Beters" /1944/, "Manservant and Maidervant" /1947/, "Two Worlds and their Ways" /1949/, "Darkness and Day" /1951/, "The Present and the Past" /1953/ /translated into Polish by Bronisława Balcłowa in 1972/, "Mother and Son" /1955/, "A Heritage and its History" /1959/, "The Mighty and Their Fall" /1961/, "A God and His Gifts" /1963/, "The Last and the First" /1971/.
2. Robert Liddel, "The Novels of I. Compton-Burnett", in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Charles Burkhardt, /London, 1972/, p.84.
3. I. Compton-Burnett and Margaret Jourdain, "A Conversation", op.cit., p.27.
4. Liddel, op.cit., pp.89-90.
5. Robert Liddel, The Novels of I. Compton-Burnett, /London, 1955/, p.39.
6. Cicely Greig, I. C. Burnett: A Memoir, /London, 1972/, p.25.
7. Edward Sackville-West, "Ladies whose bright pens...", in The

- Art of I. Compton-Burnett, p.112.
8. Mario Prez, "The Novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett" in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett, p.126.
 9. Liddel, The Novels of I. Compton-Burnett, pp.93-103.
 10. Cf. Anthony Burgess, The Novel Now: A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction, /London, 1971/, p.119.
 11. Michsel Millgate, "Interview with Miss Compton-Burnett, in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett, p.37.
 12. Cf. Bronisława Bazutowa, "Type versus character in the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett", kwartalnik Neofilologiczny, XVII /1970/, pp.377-398.
 13. Jim Preston, "A Heritage and its History", in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett; pp.68-75.
 14. Nathalie Sarraute, "Conversation and Sub-Conversation", in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett, pp.137-157.
 15. Charles Burkhardt, "Introduction" to The Art of I. Compton-Burnett, p.11.
 16. Cf. Walter Allen, Tradition and Dream: A Critical Survey of British and American Fiction from the 1920s to the Present Day, /London, 1971/, p.210.
 17. Cf. Robert Liddel, The Novels of I. Compton-Burnett, p.90.
 18. Cf. Angus Wilson, The Novels of I. Compton-Burnett, in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett, p.131.
 19. Cf. Edward Seckville-West, op.cit., p.106.
 20. Liddel, "The Novels of I. Compton-Burnett", in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett, p.102.
 21. Hilary Spurling, "The Last and the First", in The Art of I. Compton-Burnett, p.76.

LUBELSKIE MATERIAŁY NEOFILOLOGICZNE—1975

Bożena Kowalowa

Historyk współczesności - Hermann Kant
/w pięćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin pisarza/

Twórczość Hermanna Kanta, obejmująca obok szeregu opowiadań, szkiców i felietonów również dwie główne powieści "Die Anla" /1965/ oraz "Das Impressum" /1972/, rozwijająca się i doskonaląca w organicznym i nierozzerwalnym związku z dziejami powstania, krzepnięcia i rozkwitu Niemieckiej Republiki Demokratycznej. Podkreśla to sam pisarz, w wielu wywiadach nazywając się pisarzem na wskroś WRD-owskim, bez reszty zaangażowanym w sprawę budowy socjalistycznego porządku społecznego w tym kraju. Jako wiecprzewodniczący Związku Pisarzy WRD i laureat nagrody państwowej a równocześnie długoletni działacz SED, realizuje Hermann Kant w swych utworach postulat partyności literatury, uczestnicząc w wielkiej, ogólnonarodowej dyskusji ideologicznej. Biografia zarówno Kanta jak i bohaterów jego powieści jest reprezentatywna dla pierwszej generacji FDJ, dla młodych ludzi, którzy natychmiast po rozgromieniu hitlerowskiego fałszywego społeczeństwa. Stąpali oni przed trudnym zadaniem zdobycia wiedzy i kwalifikacji zawodowych, co umożliwiła im ówczesna doniosła i szeroko zakrojona rewolucja oświatowa w Niemieckiej Republice Demokratycznej, m.in. stworzenie słynnych fakultetów dla robotników i chłopów /"ABF"/. Hermann