in the way of obtaining it—difficulties not insuperable but only to be surmounted at the cost of some sacrifice and privation'.

As so often in Eliot, the incidental illuminations and provocations are worth having, even if the larger argument remains shaky. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* is, in its uneven and contradictory way, a significant work in a particular tradition of socio-cultural enquiry that English men of letters have been engaged in since the early nineteenth century. Although Eliot wrote from an idiosyncratically conservative position, that was only possible to one who came to English life as an outsider, no matter how thoroughly he assimilated himself, his book has been quietly influential among left-wing writers in the same tradition, particularly on Raymond Williams. In his own essay on Eliot, Williams sees him as Mill saw Coleridge, as an impressive adversary, who 'is the natural means of rescuing from oblivion truths which Tories have forgotten, and which the prevailing schools of Liberalism never knew'.

Calepin Rides Again: The French Scene

by Louis Allen

Michel Butor and the return of Fourier

Between the promoters of the present discontents and the revolutionaries of the heroic early nineteenth century there seems to be one great difference: the refusal of detailed prescription for the society of the future. Our world is to be violently overthrown, but when we enquire what is to replace it, the answers are usually expressed in terms of a vaguely existentialist adventure, an undefined project thrust into the future, where love and risk will combine to create the millennium.

Older Utopias were vastly more specific. In fact it was almost a diagnostic feature that they had to be: either to carry the reader's narrative interest, as in More's *Utopia* or Wells's *The World of William Clissold* (a book my provincial 1930s childhood fed on avidly), or to permit the social scientist to roam untrammelled in the realms of gold because his real appetite was a true romantic one for the poetry rather than the mechanisms of a new society. One who attempted to combine both poetry and mechanism was Charles Fourier, a prolific writer who has recently been expensively reprinted, more, I should imagine, for his impact on surrealism than for any residual value he may possess as a social analyst. Fourier

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was seventeen when the French Revolution broke out and died in 1837, after dabbling in a number of vaguely financial callings, and publishing endless works on the evils of industrialism and how they should be remedied. *His* society sinned because it organized the slavery of women and was founded on the exploitation of pauperism. It could only be redeemed by the proper use of the passions, which would ultimately lead to a state of Final Harmony run by workers' syndicates or 'Phalanstères'. These *phalanstères* were the romantic equivalent of the *abbaye de Thélème* and Fourier's imagination gorged itself upon working out the absurdly precise details of how to run them and the material surroundings which the good life required.

One of the characteristics of the *Phalange*—and one can see where André Breton's interest in it had its source—was Fourier's preaching of the emancipation of women. Once liberated from the bondage of domestic work—Fourier hoped to achieve this by sharing it out on a co-operative basis—they were to be the competitors not the servants of man. Those nations which enslaved women were, he thought, demonstrably the most vicious in history: 'as the Chinese bear witness, who are the dregs of the planet, the most villainous, the most cowardly, the greediest of all industrious peoples; they are therefore the most jealous and the most intolerant in matters of love'. In the new world, Attraction would replace Compulsion, and so work in the *phalanstères* was to be carried out in 'passional series', the individual choosing the series in which he wishes to contribute his labour according to his own personal and transitory taste. The transitory nature of his choice was irrelevant, because whenever he wanted to stop there would always be some other worker ready to take his place since *his* passion would in the nature of things be attracted towards it. 'If there is a piece of work which will take a gardener fifty hours, put fifty men on it for an hour apiece, and each one of them will, as a result, be able to occupy himself in the course of fifty hours, with fifty functions instead of one.' Friendship would become more widespread as workers passed from one series to another in constantly varying groupings. Service would lose its stigma, since everybody would take his share. He even foresaw the need for preventing industrial noise:

> One of the wings of the phalanstery will contain all the noise-producing workshops, such as those involving hammering, forging, joinery; it must also contain all the industrial assemblies of children who customarily create a great deal of noise in industry and even in music. This assembly will prevent one of the most exasperating inconveniences of our civilized cities, in which every street has its man working away with a hammer, or where some hawker of ironware or apprentice clarinet-player is bursting the eardrums of fifty families in the neighbourhood.

Zany as it undoubtedly is—he was after all a contemporary of the Eglinton Tournament as well as of Robert Owen—Fourier's interest

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for the historian of social theory lies in his critique of the alienation imposed by industrial relationships, and its corollary, man's difficulty in extracting pleasure from the exercise of his physical and intellectual powers. In this sense, his works belong to the archaeology of the social movements of the late nineteenth century, and Marx and Engels relegated them to a museum of social theories, dismissing them as 'critico-utopian socialism and communism' because they were mere constructs of the brain at a time of under-developed capitalist production. They were appeals to pure reason when the appeal to contemporary history was not yet possible.

The 'modernity' of Fourier lies elsewhere. For the surrealists, and particularly Breton, Fourier's ideas were an extraordinary fermentation. They made on Breton an impact similar to that of primitive medieval paintings, by their quality of extreme freshness. This is why Breton, for whom surrealism was—among other things—the apotheosis of desire in language, celebrated Fourier in his *Ode à Charles Fourier*[1] and paid him the ultimate compliment of using Fourier's own linguistic inventions to do so. The *Ode* was written in the summer of 1945 in the garden of a guesthouse in Reno where Breton had gone with his future wife to obtain a divorce from the current one. Both Fourier and Breton believed in the possibility of a communal life lived under the banner of the pleasure principle, both were convinced of the possibility of an erotic civilization, in a world ruled only by desire and love, and from which any Supreme Being had been banished. When he was writing, though, Breton was obsessed with primitivism of another kind: he had become fascinated by the destiny of the Hopi Indians, and never grew tired of exploring their reservation. Looking at what had happened to them, and also what had happened elsewhere in the hot American desert in that summer of 1945, Breton tells Fourier, through his poem, that we are no better off than in those days when the great dream of the French Revolution had failed. There has been great slaughter, and mankind has betrayed all the passions, the *ressorts* or springs of human action which Fourier analysed: the sensuous ones, touch, sight, hearing, taste, smell; the affective ones, friendship, love, ambition, family; the mechanizing ones, cabalistic, composite, butterfly (the need for diversity and variety).

And yet . . . Breton cannot give up the notion of a paradisal future here on earth that awaits fully surrealist man, whatever the cold logic of social engineering:

> The improvement of the lot of mankind is only carried out very slowly and spasmodically by means of very down to earth claims and cold calculations; even so, the real spur to action is still the irrational belief in the path towards a millennial future.

In a sense, this is Breton's answer, by anticipation, to the deep pessimism of the later Camus, as well as to the abyss of mass pain

[1]Reprinted in *Signe ascendant*, No. 37 in Gallimard's *Poésie* series.

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and suffering on behalf of paradise here on earth which engendered it. Breton need not have worried: the millennium is always with us, as Michel Butor has shown us in one of the most obfuscating and vertiginously poetic books of the last twelve months: *La Rose des vents* (32 *Rhumbs pour Charles Fourier*).[1] Like Breton, Butor employs Fourier's mathematical categories, anticipations and vocabulary, but the vision is amplified by his own fascination with contemporary science fiction. It is easier to show his style in order to convey it, so here is one of Butor's fourierized predictions:

13. Extroduction: manufactures
    PREFACE: Titan the architect
        the hour of coolness

The immense equipment demanded by *gastrosophy* once its point of maturity is reached will require the construction of large factories and a considerable development of mechanical awareness. The need to assemble in one spot the millions of spectators or tasters who are interested by the Olympic games of all kinds will stimulate the building of a new type of caravanserai.

The 10th creation will be a prelude to the entry of humanity into hypercivilization; it will be crammed with burrowing animals: antirats, antimoles will dig mine galleries for us which will also be the foundations of towers (the education they receive will permit them to discover interesting minerals, and to sort them; the antipigs will dig up truffles from rare earths), and building animals: hyperbeavers, antiwasps, antitermites, or even vegetables useful in this way. At sea, colonies of tamed rapid hypercorals will secrete tolldykes and platforms under the direction of their shepherds.

The first buildings of *harmony*, in freestone, have been gradually replaced, in hypernomadism and hyperbarbarism, by portable buildings and rafts gliding perpetually from shore to shore, as mankind loses its habits of fixed domicile. The multiplication of transplants and transhumances has produced a dispersal of terrains for pasture and planting, sometimes very far apart; the estates of the *phalanxes* have become inextricably mingled, they move constantly from place to place in the course of the seasons, sometimes setting out in their entirety on journeys, leaving to their neighbours the care of their lofts, gardens and workshops, on the promise of a like service at some future date.

Hypercivilization will combine this patiently reconquered mobility with a new fixity. The *pivotal* edifice formed from terraces superimposed one upon another, of which the loftiest will atain the height of the peaks of the Alps or the Caucasus, will endlessly multiply camp sites at the principal centres. *Phalanxes* will try to outdo each other in elegance and in the ingenuity with which they arrange their environment. The right of internal combination is here exalted. Utilitarian buildings, but above all monuments of splendour, proclamations, challenges to other regions.

. . . At each level, we shall enjoy a particular temperature which our differentiated sense of touch will allow us to appreciate and which the aerists will subtly modulate. The *refined* . . . will take baths of natural or artificial breezes, at all degrees of humidity, at all points of the compass, and will go down into thermal installations which will be all the more carefully worked out as their vision becomes *coaquatic*, and as they

[1]Gallimard, 1970, pp. 173, 13 Fr.

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> will therefore be able to see clearly under water without a glass, their gaze piercing the thickness of the waves.
>
> Every sense will then develop a marine branch: our touch will become sensitive to currents and pressures, hence to the depths; our ears will become adjusted to sonorities passing through fluids; we shall become capable of smelling the proximity of fish in the course of a dive, of recognizing by its own peculiar smell the region we have reached.
>
> In this epoch of great explorations, but—this time—submarine explorations, diving corvettes harnessed to antisharks will travel back and forth over the ocean bed. The attraction of the sea will become so strong that we will always choose as sites for skyscraper caravanserais those mines or grottoes (for they will be buried as deep underground as they will rise high above ground) which are closest to the shore, and which will obligatorily include a port. Between the seasons of festivals and congresses they will be stages at which we can pass from raft-train to car-train, from marine to terrestrial pastures.
>
> Underground lighting will be provided by hyperphosphorus and hyperfireflies, quite adequate for eyes which enjoy *coaerial* or *conocturnal vision.*
>
> The universe will be concentrated, we will be able to perceive quite easily the cortege of planets around the cardinal stars. . . .

It all seems a far cry from Breton's 'down-to-earth claims', and it is indeed difficult to draw even a very crooked line which will connect a strike for a 10 per cent wage increase and this gallicized *Things to Come.* It will be interesting to see if Butor's visions acquire in time the patina of an epoch like Jules Verne's predictions (and the illustrations that went with them).

•

The Anti-colonialism of Paul Nizan

All the gods that failed seem rather shoddy in comparison, just as seeing Sartre's *Les Chemins de la Liberté* on BBC Television has emphasised how *passé* is its motivation as well as its background, how intolerably seedy that world was, and how, in a sense, it is no more contemporary than *The Forsyte Saga.* Few voices arise from that past with their ringing convictions full and resonant now. Paul Nizan is an exception to this, but of course his communist orthodoxy has been called into question. Nizan's is a very lively intelligence indeed, and it appears under the imprint, as one might expect, of one of the most combative Marxist publishers in Europe: François Maspéro. Both as publisher and bookseller, Maspéro continues an industrious and versatile activity as stage-manager of third-world socialism and is constantly harried by governmental attempts at political censorship. He has seen far worse, of course: his father, Henri Maspéro, one of France's greatest orientalists and an authority on Chinese religions, was murdered by the Nazis in Buchenwald. Maspéro runs that well-stocked and useful bookshop 'La Joie de lire' near the church of Saint Séverin, and is busily reprinting in his cheap 'Petite collection' the classics of the non-Soviet Marxist past. He has recently re-issued in two volumes Jean-Jacques Brochier's

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selection of Nizan's articles and letters.[1] Nizan is still regarded by 'official' French communism, through the eyes of Thorez and Aragon, as a police informer—he left the party after the Russo-German Pact of 1939—but he is in fact one of the shrewdest and most dedicated of anti-colonialists. Oddly enough, his field was not only, as one might have expected from a French intellectual, Indo-China or Algeria, but included the British outpost of Aden, and his *Aden-Arabie* is a pitiless evocation of the British abroad in the nineteen-twenties. The 'correspondance d'Aden' in Vol. 1 of *Paul Nizan, intellectuel communiste* gives a glimpse of the wanderings among the British which went to the making of that book, from unaccountable explorations of the Roman Wall (and Hexham villainously misspelt as 'Mexbam'—oh, chauvinistic French printers!) and the hills behind Swansea, *via* dips into *The Crock of Gold* and *The Constant Nymph* on the way to Port Saïd—'You're not up-to-date in London if you've not read the novel or seen the play'—to the extra perspective of judgment opened out to him in Aden almost in spite of himself by sheer distance from Paris:

> I judge Europe. In fact that's all I do: it's an exercise which becomes easier every mile further you go.

He might be predictably fierce towards British military presence at the tip of the Red Sea:

> Yesterday we had the pleasure of the visit of a British aircraft carrier on its way to civilize the Chinese. The 2nd Devons have left Aden. May the Chinese kill as many of them as possible.

But a curious trick of fate led him, at the end of his life, to a re-creation of a Colonel Bramble-like existence during an attachment as liaison officer to a British unit of the B.E.F. in 1940: *Boum!* and *Run Rabbit, Run!* before the arrival of the tankmen of the Apocalypse. The bespectacled communist intellectual seems to have got on well enough with his 'braves et cordiaux' English companions with whom he sat through endless films, for whom he negotiated billets and rations, and who helped him find his way through inexplicable pieces of webbing equipment—with only an occasional moment of exasperation: 'how tiring it is to live in English, to speak this kind of language'. Most of them died with him—he was 37—at Dunkirk on 23rd May, 1940.

This earth which has fed you

To read Gustave Thibon is to slide at once to the other end of the spectrum; but only in terms of detail, since the concern for integrity is a link where none might have been suspected. His new book[2] rehearses themes familiar to Thibon's readers, but the aphoristic style and penetration are as crisp as ever, and compel one to take him seriously even when he seems most deliberately wrong-headed.

[1] *Paul Nizan, intellectuel communiste* (2 vols. Petits Collection Maspéro, 1970, 6.90 frs each).
[2] *Notre regard qui manque à la lumière* (Fayard, 1970, pp. 252).

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And it does sometimes require an effort not of will, but of goodwill, to remember Thibon not only as the man who gave shelter to Simone Weil and, by his later publication of her writings, made her genius known at exactly the time when the world was readiest to receive it, but also as a largely misguided reactionary, a paler Maurras over whom lies still the shadow of Vichy and its oppressive distortion of both Church and State. The events which led to Vichy are thirty years in the past, but the debate of which they are a part still goes on in France. Some intellectuals simply backed the wrong horse at a crucial moment in French history; others willingly achieved an opprobrium which they richly deserved, and the tears which are still regularly shed for them in the more obscure little journals of a fanatical but articulate right-wing deserve no sympathy. But Thibon should not be numbered with them.

His major themes are human and divine love, and the restoration of a social order without benefit of democracy. His medium is either prose poetry or the lengthy aphoristic meditation, not the easiest of forms for the lazy reader. Or the lazy writer, either, because they can often lead to banality, and Thibon does not always avoid it. He can, for instance, define civilization as 'at one and the same time a collaboration with, and a victory over, nature' and yet show an almost cynical shrewdness in describing as almost 'incurably mediocre' the notion not of expecting everything from Woman but 'of *finding* everything in a woman' and likewise, on another level entirely, in his far from commonplace assessment of the ambiguities of suffering, at least when not purely physical:

> In this world—except for saints—there is perhaps only one completely genuine form of suffering, and that is physical pain. What remains of the suffering of the soul once you take away the torment of pride, envy and dreams, the pointless regret for the past and the equally pointless anguish in face of the future?

Nor is this shrewdness merely the grasp on reality of the horny-handed peasant, as Thibon makes clear when he comments on a standard gambit in anti-religious polemic: Nietzsche's notion that the idea of a beyond is a negation of all reality. No doubt this may be the case in a being ill-suited for earthly joy, but the explanation is inadequate:

> The need for immortality may very well arise also from the opposite experience: perfect joy, overpowering love, both demand immortality; the revelation of a reality which is too full to be held within the framework of time is already an anticipation of eternal life. It is both its promise and its proof.

His vision of human love as an amalgam of passion, friendship, sacrifice and prayer has obvious affinities with Claudel's, but he has seen love capped by death ('the only thing in the world which does not lie, the purest image of God') and the absence of Claudelian rhetoric when he speaks of this renders it all the more convincing:

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You are slipping out of the world,
This earth which has fed you is suddenly your enemy . . .
You are not falling asleep, you will not wake again identical with yourself. . . .
—Bread, light and water hurt you. . . .
Your gaze capsizes in the depths of your eyes
And your lips are absent from that unreal smile in which the soul lies quivering.

'This earth which has fed you' is the *leit-motive* of Thibon's praise of order and hierarchy, and there is a text which conveys the link in terms almost of a mystical vision:

> I came to a halt going down the hillside. The sabbath plain lay sleeping. In the foreground, an overturned plough pointed its gleaming coulter to the sky. The rhythms of the cosmos and the work of human hands had come together. Order and design seemed to exude from the very pores of the landscape: a full and harmonious security stretched on and on over the future. You could make out, robed in the delicate pallor of the heavens, the unerring sequence of the seasons, and, yonder, under the farmhouse roofs diminished by distance lay hid in the souls of those who laboured the gestures of seed-sowing and harvests to come. All was proportion, harmony, fidelity, new beginnings. . . .
>
> At that moment, in that place, I understood the crime of romanticism: it lies in the forgetfulness of what this earth is, this order, this labour, it lies in the betrayal of this strength and these usages which have never failed to nourish man; it is desertion tricked out as escape.
>
> (*L'Echelle de Jacob*)

Inevitably, the feeling for order is transmuted into distaste for democratic institutions, the human idols which destroy order:

> In France, for a century or more, freedom has been introduced where it does not exist. The people are torn away from the necessity which sustains, from the lowly and motherly womb of institutions, usages and duties within which freedom can unfold healthily. Instead, it has been made to expand outside its area, in a domain not adapted to its nature, and in which it is self-refuted: the dogma of popular sovereignty, with its corollary in practice, universal suffrage. You might as well ask a blind man to choose *freely* between colours.

No doubt it was distressingly the fault of circumstance, of the stultifying options offered by French political life, that Thibon's abstract love for order and harmony, and for their human expressions (family and true authority), should have been transmogrified into the ideology of the silliest forms of reaction. Thibon should not be blamed if the new aristocracy, which would, he felt sure, rid society of self-worship and the deception of the people, turned out to be the wretched sleazy *fantoches* of the Hôtel du Parc. And this background makes even more piquant the first encounter with Simone Weil: the peasant autodidact (Thibon has acquired a knowledge of half-a-dozen languages, mathematics, philosophy, biology, medicine) on his farm in the Ardèche, for whom Vichy's National Revolution must have seemed to be the incarnation of his fondest ideals, confronted by a Parisian Jewish bluestocking of extreme left-wing views.

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The result was the very opposite of what might have been expected. They disagreed about almost everything, save their profound acceptance of each other's value, so that Thibon could write of her, in his preface to *La Pesanteur et la Grace*,

> It would be very easy for me to refer to my memories and our conversations and paint a portrait of her which would be a good likeness on the surface and which, by its originality, would enchant all those who love the details and anecdotal element in human life. I loved her too much for that: no brother can speak of a sister the way one writer does of another. . . .

Thibon's gift for friendship is at the very opposite pole of what Montherlant has described as that masquerade of love 'the capture of beings'—for Thibon it must consist of attracting and yet never holding:

> Draw people to you, but do not keep them. Be sufficiently radiant for souls to come to you, and yet sufficiently unobtrusive for them not to be tied to you—let them go beyond you.

The mistrust of the self which is implicit in this definition of friendship lies at the basis of Thibon's rejection, by anticipation, of the curious God of South Bank theology.

> Why am I a Christian? [he asks]. Because I think in terms of a God who is neither pure darkness nor myself—a being who, while being like me, to the very core, is also everything I lack. Because in this world I desire to bless everything and deify nothing. . . . Because I feel that the adventure of mankind opens out on to something other than hollow despair, or a hollow questioning, or a hollow indifference. To reconcile my immense love for man with my profound disgust with man. . . . My passion for the world makes me a Christian; my respect for, and my thankfulness towards, that destiny which sustains me and which is not myself. . . .

A millennium which contains a Supreme Being is bound to be radically different from one like Butor's or Breton's which does not. I think Thibon has the key to the curious convergence in Russian Communism of the millennial romantic and the calculation of action:

> Never has the contrast and the solidarity between the worship of mankind and the contempt for mankind, between the magnificence of the end and the baseness of the means, reached such extremes.

The convergence between the practical man of the technocratic age and the idealist dreamers of human perfectibility is explained by the habit of *facility*.

> In effect, nothing is easier to manipulate than pure ideas, and the flight of the mind given over to itself never encounters any resistance. . . . But matter too, inert and inanimate matter which is the technologist's sphere of activity, also allows itself to be mastered with a strange meekness. Witness the fabulous progress of science.

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As a result both technologists and idealists attack human problems with the same facile optimism. The incarnation of man is a stumbling block for both.

I find Thibon both easy to accept in short doses and also a stimulus to fruitful contradiction. *Notre regard qui manque à la lumière* is composed of short pieces which lead one inexorably to acknowledgments some of which are as hard to take as Simone Weil's harsh and uncompromising picture of the remote necessity of God. But he also has some interesting things to say about the impact of the (undoubtedly desirable) overthrow of pharisaism which is one of the current triumphs of the Church, and which the French associate, naturally enough, with Mauriac and Graham Greene:

> That faith and love triumph over law is an elementary Christian truth which only pharisees fail to acknowledge. What disturbs me is not the truth itself, but the indiscreet way in which it is displayed to the masses: God's secret divulged, love naked and stammering, vulnerable to the footlights and the barkers at the fair. Raised by their culture and inner life above social conformity, great minds seriously underestimate the danger of this. The mass of mankind is made up of a majority of mediocre beings. To prevent themselves being dissolved in nothingness, they need an unbreakable code of external observances. . . .
>
> You proclaim that sloth, drunkenness, adultery are not absolute obstacles between the soul and God, so long as they are accompanied by charity and humility. Of course you are right, but when you reveal that *inner* truth in the glaring light of day, you run the risk of justifying the slothful, the drunkard, the adulterer, and fixing them solidly in their sin. Without giving them either charity or humility. Worse: you run the risk of sterilizing in them the germ of those virtues by inspiring in them a new kind of pride, subtler and more impure than that of the virtuous pharisees: the pride of the sinner who feels that he is saved no matter what he does, the complacent conceit in his own inner disorder. . . . The man who is *too* well aware that you can remain pure and humble and yet break the law is no longer either pure or humble. . . .

Are we all Scobies nowadays?

Religion and Social Work: Diocesan Rescue Societies as a Case Example

by Noel Timms

The subject of this article[1] invites (and has received) discussion at a high level of abstraction, but the basic question can be posed quite simply: are religious social work organizations (such as the Diocesan Rescue Societies) religious organizations that undertake social work

[1]The material was collected during the author's recent survey undertaken at the invitation of the Catholic Child Welfare Council. The opinions of Administrators of Rescue Societies are taken from an early phase of the enquiry conducted by Fr S. Sellar.

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