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will continue with his education beyond the school. It would be pleasant if the teaching of principles could be alike for different subjects; and if reading of the classics and surveys of the history of science and its problems, and of other bodies of knowledge could give a grasp and mastery of principles as well as a sense of their existence and a feeling of their importance.

The mastery of principles, in which alone is their possession as intellectual habit in the light of historical and analytical studies, is to be gained slowly and tediously, in the press and detail of work, the suggestion at the elbow. Fumbling, struggle, and pain are among the conditions of mastery; though, indeed, it is the presence of the teacher which prevents the student, and hence the citizen, from repeating all the old mistakes and hesitations of the race. This, most particularly, *Teacher in America* keeps before us, and for this our debt to it cannot be too great.

~~LINCOLN REIS~~

Lawrence Leighton

# Honest Gide

INTERVIEWS IMAGINAIRES. By *André Gide.* Editions Jacques Schiffrin. $2.00

IMAGINARY INTERVIEWS. By *André Gide.* Translated by *Malcolm Cowley.* Knopf. $2.00

PAGES DE JOURNAL 1939-1942. By *André Gide.* Pantheon. $2.00

HAMLET. By *William Shakespeare.* Edition bilingue. Traduction nouvelle de *André Gide.* Pantheon. $4.50

*INTERVIEWS Imaginaires* consists of a series of dialogues, mostly on literary and linguistic matters, which appeared in *Le Figaro* in 1941 and 1942, an introduction to an edition of Goethe's plays, a review of Jacques Chardonne's *Chronique Privée de l'An* 1940, and a few pages from Gide's journal describing the deliverance of Tunis. Malcolm Cowley's translation, which is excellent, will probably be more serviceable to the average reader since, although omitting the bibliographical note that the original contains, it includes material that is not in the French edition, notably an interview on the subject of contemporary American fiction, as well as a sensible foreword on Gide by Mr. Cowley and a helpful ap-

pendix by him on the subject of French prosody. The *Journal,* which covers the period from the outbreak of the war to the spring of 1942, is in the manner of that for earlier years, although the matter is slighter in amount. This volume also has two of the *Figaro* "interviews" which appear in part and in a curiously different context in Cowley's translation, together with some notebook passages, the whole making the strongest statement of opposition to Catholicism and the frankest exposition of his peculiar religious attitude that Gide has publicly uttered.

The first act of his translation of *Hamlet* was published in 1929. He abandoned it because of the difficulty of the task and because, as he told André Rouveyre, his interest faltered. It is now completed and published in a limited bilingual edition, marred by a few misprints, and without the preface to the earlier portion when Gide discoursed generally on the problem of translation. There he inveighed against literalness, and yet this translation has a quite remarkable faithfulness to sense. The use of prose throughout assists this while it perhaps restricts the significance of the drama. In the new preface Gide speaks of the extra-natural reality of the play. This perhaps has gone, yet the translation remains, one might say, an interesting and intelligent commentary, which conceals in its naturalness, as its author hoped, the difficulty that lay behind it.

In the *Imaginary Interviews* he was, as he says in the *Journal,* merely stirring the surface of ideas. He makes a brief exculpation of the writers of France from responsibility for the French defeat, but he largely avoids political matters. He touches lightly on the novelists of present day France, the non-existence of rules for novel-writing, on grammar, metre, prosody, on French poetry, past—with an interesting defense of Hugo—and present, on the relation between the poet and the public. The imaginary interviewer is at times a vehicle for slow-witted opposition, at times the exponent of Gide's own self-questioning. The dialogues are pleasant, revelatory of Gide's acumen, hardly profound.

It is the lack of reference to the events of the times, the non-political character of the interviews, that has caused doubts and more than doubts to many people with regard to their seriousness. The attack on Chardonne, whose book was the first important one to idealize the German victory, has political implications, but the attack is largely on a semantic basis. Mr. Cowley finds such implications elsewhere; certain reviewers have praised Gide for paying his attention in time of war and defeat to the eternal values and questions of literature. But other writers, notably Louis

Aragon, have raised, with drastic severity, the issue whether Gide could not be rightly considered a passive collaborator. It is difficult for a non-combatant American, who has not been obliged to expose either his life or his liberty, to speak or to judge between two men, both of whom have his great respect, both of whom have been obliged to expose their life and their liberty.

Aragon's attack, which he made in a communication to the editor of *Lettres Françaises* and which was reprinted in part in an issue of *The New Masses* last winter, is sharp. He cites many passages from the *Journal* which show Gide's interest in the way Germans (both Hitler and Goethe) think, feel, and act. He offers other passages which demonstrate the cynical Gide, who can note the different degrees of patriotism among his fellow-countrymen, and detect the willingness of some of them to accept German overlordship if it should bring an easier material life. Above all else Aragon is horrified by entries dated September 5 and 28, 1940, where Gide says that to adjust oneself to the enemy is not cowardice but wisdom, and that even with the suppression of freedom of expression, art and thought will suffer less than under a regime of excessive liberty.

It is noteworthy that all of Aragon's quotations are from the summer of 1940 and that he pays no attention to the preface. There Gide says that he did not grant himself the right to change anything he had written, that he does not want to show himself more courageous than he was, and that it was not until the spring of '41 that he began to lift his head and took part again. The value of his journal is relative, he says, it marks the stages of a journey towards the light.

Ilya Ehrenburg finds in the journal "moral ugliness." Insofar as his and Aragon's attacks are a continuation of the general war on Gide that has been waged by followers of Stalin since the publication of *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* in 1936 one can certainly discount them in part—and Aragon's reference to that book entitles one to see it as a motive; it is a wonder that nobody has raked up the letter Gide wrote to Maurras back in 1916. Gide's Communist experience can serve as a guide to the understanding of much of Gide's apparent naivete in matters of state: he is, as Thomas Mann once called himself, "unpolitisch" and in the present journal practically identifies himself with those "qui, n'attachant somme toute pas grande importance au régime et à l'état social, ont surtout horreur du désordre." Gide is perhaps politically naive, but we do not on that account have to support a left-wing vendetta.

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But the larger question remains. Did Gide's perpetual curiosity with a victorious Germany now its object, and his critical awareness of the intellectual and spiritual weaknesses of pre-war France (the entry for June 14, 1940, merely sums up what he had been saying in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and *L'Ecole des Femmes;* for that matter the germ of his disapproval was plain fifty years ago in *Paludes*) produce complacence or acquiescence? Aragon does not cite the entry for June 24, 1940, which denounces Pétain nor that for March 30, 1941, where he dissociates himself from *Nouvelle Revue Française.* Yet Gide could write, as late as Septembr 12, 1941, "j'ai l'esprit si peu porté a l'insoumission."

The collapse of France plainly reduced him to a state of questioning and doubt. He could see the responsibility borne by France itself for its own defeat, a responsibility going back to Versailles. He could accept military defeat; he could hope that the values which constituted the reasons for his life were untouchable. But he was uncertain as the entry for August 20, 1940, interestingly shows. Chardonne's book came as a shock to him, showing him the intellectual degradation of the writers who had accepted Germany's victory. Except for Pétain's first speech he had never been taken in by the "propos fiduciaires" of those who were creating the new order. He had remained sceptical about the possibility of French regeneration on the superficial basis that was being laid in 1940 and 1941. He was to remain sceptical about the possibility of successful resistance, at least until he left France in the spring of 1942.

One can argue that what the world needed was heroism and not intellectual detachment, that men like Malraux were of more value than Gide at that time. And Gide would probably agree. His justification, which I think most of us in this country would accept, might be twofold. The Gide who for the first fifty years of his life had not *intervened* and whose most recent intervention, his acceptance of Communism, had ended in disillusionment and hostility was again dominant. As he says when someone wished him to play a political role after Tunis, "I think he is mistaken both about myself and about the influence my voice might have. Even if I were less tired, I should not feel myself in any way qualified for political action . . . . For one thing I haven't a clear enough picture of the dissensions that are now coming to light; for another, I am too uncertain in my own mind to propose any sort of equitable middle course." This is to some people heresy, if not treason. But there is wisdom in it, even if it sounds too Olympian to the actual fighter. And Gide has al-

ready said, in his *Retouches*, "If it often requires a great courage to go to fight, it sometimes requires a courage no less great to declare that one will not fight."

The final justification for Gide is his honesty. He has characteristically made no effort to describe himself as other than he was. He has offered all the evidence himself.

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