

Editorial: Literature of the 1930s

The first national conference on the literature of the 1930s in recent years was organised by Anglia Polytechnic University in November 1997. With an attendance of 240 people drawn from seventy British universities this was one of the largest conferences of the academic year and its popularity reflected a revival of interest in a hitherto under-researched period of literary history. While the range of views represented at the conference was wide, there was also general agreement among those present about the need to end the received view of the 1930s as antithetical to Modernism and to move beyond Auden's dismissal of the 'low dishonest decade'. It is time for a reassessment of the literature of the time in ways which take full account of its richness, diversity and historical specificity, and in particular of the contribution to literary history made by working-class men, women writers, and poets outside the Auden circle whose work has often been neglected.

This edition of *Critical Survey* is dedicated to papers first given at the 'Literature of the 1930s: Visions and Revisions' conference and includes radical new perspectives on woman novelists. Jennifer Birkett writes on Storm Jameson, Judy Simons on Rosamond Lehmann, Gay Wachman on Sylvia Townsend Warner, and David Bradshaw and Jane de Gay both on Virginia Woolf. We have also chosen papers on poets whose work has been overshadowed by the critical attention given to the Auden group; Andy Croft discusses Randall Swingler who was on the left and John Coombes Roy Campbell on the right of the British political spectrum. Essays which avoid an exclusive emphasis on the British Isles are those by Rainer Emig writing on the attractions of Germany for gay men in the 1930s and by Patrick Williams on imperial visions and revisions. Working-class writing is represented by John Fordham's article on the Liverpool seafarer, James Hanley and the lively debates about culture which characterised the period are represented in David Margolies's analysis of the important cultural journal, *Left Review*. Two essays by Rick Rylance and Chris Hopkins reflect the importance of the countryside in the discourse of this time.

It is hoped that a conference on the 1930s will become a biannual event and that the next will take place at Anglia Polytechnic University, in November, 1999.

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Mary Joannou and John Lucas