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**much CRY little WOOL—**

A number of younger writers, having produced some plays, novels, and works of philosophy or criticism of very unequal merit but all repudiating our social and political and religious establishment, the weekly journals and the national newspapers have given these authors false cohesion as a group, and a certain notoriety, as the Angry Young Men. This month two books appear from this source. Colin Wilson's second volume RELIGION AND THE REBEL; and a symposium from the group called DECLARATION. They may enable us to discover what, if anything, these young people are getting at.

**Outsider Returns**

RELIGION AND THE REBEL.

By Colin Wilson (Gollancz. 21s.).

The question that immediately presents itself to a reviewer of Mr. Colin Wilson's second book is: where does it stand in relation to his first? Mr. Wilson himself believes that it is a taking up of slack, to paraphrase his own analogy, that was left after he had finished *The Outsider* to the point where thinking is held taut against the expended capacity for feeling. Others might conclude that it is much the same book over again.

But this view is certainly too shallow.

**outsider again**

It is true that *Religion and The Rebel*, like its predecessor, deplores liberal traditions, denounces humanism and rationalism, castigates linguistic philosophy, and calls for a religious revival founded upon existentialism; and that both books attempt to reach the general problems of civilization through the special problems of its "representative figure in this age," the Outsider, the individual who sticks out of society like a sore thumb, who has found community life intolerable, for whom the daily round and the common task were futile and boring, who made his own world and saw that it was chaotic.

It is true that the two catalogues of significant Outsiders in history and literature are much the same, allowing for the fact that further reading between the books has enabled the author to add Spengler, Toynbee and Jesus to his later list. But in *Religion and the Rebel* the coinage has become debased. There is an air of literary inflation. The amount of reading on which the whole Outsider collection is built up would be noteworthy in a middle-aged intellectual dilettante; granted that the reading has sometimes been careless, it is none-the-less phenomenal in a young man of 26 obliged to fend for himself since school-leaving.

### **inflation**

However, it is not so much the numbers of these much-quoted Outsiders as their constant reappearance in the discursive sections of the book—their speed of circulation, as it were—that produces the inflationary effect. The portrait of the Outsider himself has undergone inflation, too. He is no longer the romantic failure, the man out of step, who sees too deeply, who has faced chaos, who makes his protest and retires to insanity or death. He has become larger, and more sinister, "a halfway house to the Superman" of Nietzsche.

He is now the thwarted genius, the visionary, the would-be prophet, the man of will and purpose, "nature's attempt to counterbalance the death of purpose in the world." This is the man destined to take his place at the head of our civilisation when it has been re-orientated to give the dominant role to a Church. This is the man to clear away the rubbish of liberal institutions and lead society out of the era of cultural decline in which Spengler saw it in his *Decline the West*. Where he would lead it is only too evident. "We have done away with political organizations but reinforced religious institutions," said Hitler to the Reichstag in 1934. This is just what Mr. Wilson proposes, and although he makes the conventional disclaimers, one cannot help noticing a few sidelong glances at Totalitarianism.

### **black outsider?**

No, admitting that society must nurture its real men of genius, there is not much to be said for making, at the cost of liberalities, merely a world fit for its misanthropes. In case this should be thought unfair to the Outsider figure, I should like to propose another candidate for this representative group: a man

of action, mountaineer and poet who would brilliantly pass all the Outsider tests; a man who hated his fellows and despised normal behaviour; who ended all his letters with a declaration of his credo about self-expression and the freedom of will; who formulated his own religion; a visionary and, on his own testimony, more than a visionary—the late Mr. Aleister Crowley.

R. L. C. Footit.