

Stuart Cloete 1897-1976

By NATHANIEL WEYL

The sudden death of Stuart Cloete on 18th March brings to a close the career of one of South Africa's outstanding novelists, a man of integrity and courage whose last years were plagued by his belief that Western Civilization was in the throes of a probably terminal failure of nerve.

Born in Paris and educated in English public schools, Stuart Cloete was one of the youngest company commanders in the British Army in the First World War. Almost fatally wounded at the Somme, he took up farming, first in France, then in the Transvaal, but found it insufficiently fulfilling. At the age of 40, he went to London to try to make a living as a writer. His first novel, *Turning Wheels*, was a Book of the Month Club selection which sold over a million copies. A series of novels, largely about South Africa's pioneer era, her giant predators, and the interaction between Boer and Bantu, followed, revealing deep understanding of the primitive and sensuous world and growing mastery of narrative art.

With the rise of ethnocentrifugal attitudes after the First World War, Stuart Cloete's great panorama of South Africa became unpopular with the critics and literati. Praise was lavished on those writers who saw the South African scene as naked race repression, who depicted the white minority as gross, uncouth and sadistic, and who viewed Bantu rule and total integration as the sovereign remedies for societal ills.

Under these conditions, Stuart Cloete turned to short stories, an excellent autobiographical novel about the First World War, *How Young They Died*, and his autobiography, the first volume of which, *A Victorian Son*, was a classic evocation of the final decade of that long era.

One of Stuart Cloete's main themes was that mechanization had split man from the biosphere and had homogenized life into a bland pabulum. He was keenly aware of the class snobbery, cruelty and intolerance of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, but could note nostalgically that "people sang lullabies to children when I was a baby, but everyone sang then" and that man lived in daily communion with the sights, sounds, smells and touch of the world of nature.

The hero died and was perhaps buried with the unknown soldier. In his place, center stage went to "the drug addict, the

alcoholic, the criminal.” It was “the day of the failure. He fails because he is underprivileged, comes from a broken home, or is a Negro. His excuses are endless—his parents, his teachers, society in general. The only person he never blames is himself.” (Thus, one of the murderers in *Macbeth* calls himself one “whom the vile blows and buffets of the world hath so incens’d that I am reckless what I do to spite the world.” His colleague alleges that he, too, is a man. Macbeth retorts: “Ay, in the catalogue, ye go for men, as hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves, are clept all by the name of dogs. . . .”) Stuart Cloete would have agreed with hereditarian Macbeth, not with the environmentalist murderers.

Reviewers of Stuart Cloete’s First World War novel found it incomprehensible that its hero should willingly offer his life to defend an Empire that was “beautiful, orderly and powerful” and that rested on tradition and honor. Many viewers of *Upstairs, Downstairs* may have been equally nonplussed when the widow, on learning that her son has been killed in action, quoted Macaulay:

And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his Gods?

Stuart Cloete conceded the irrationality of fighting for the Queen and Commonwealth of his later decades, a society exemplifying “blackmail of the masses—Labour, students, coloured immigrants. . . .” It took a thousand years to create the British people, he added, “possibly the finest relatively homogeneous race yet to be formed. What madness therefore to dilute these genes with those of people of alien tropic origin. Nor do I believe that the present components of the English population could withstand the hardships suffered in the Second World War.”

Cloete asserted that “racism and patriotism must be and are to a great extent synonymous. A patriot is a man who serves his King, country and people. . . . Racism appears to be a built-in characteristic of the human race and the complete integration hoped for by the social scientists of today is a wishful dream rooted in unreality.” After decades of acute observation of the peoples of southern Africa, Cloete came to the conclusion: “I do not believe that all men and all races are equal in ability; there is nothing in history to suggest that this is true though it is the popularly accepted theory, and history is being falsified in an effort to prove this thesis.”

In a letter to me, Stuart Cloete pointed out that the persecu-

tion of the Indian population by Idi Amin of Uganda was merely further demonstration of the insincerity of the black demand for a multiracial society. Since the Negroes were unable to compete with the intelligent and industrious Indians, they solved the problem by seizing their property without compensation and ousting them. The envy of the ungifted for those with talent is one of the most underestimated motivating forces in the lemming rush toward international disorder.

Ten years ago, Stuart Cloete told me that he was glad to be old. He believed he had perhaps lived in as good a time as any man could have chosen. He said that he did not envy my twin sons the prospect of witnessing the debacle of one of the few brief and brilliant periods in the annals of man in which order was combined with freedom. He died at 78 aware that the land of his ancestors stood with her back to the sea and perhaps facing a final battle for survival.

The Social Mediators

By ROBERT EVANS

Of all that is written, I love only what a person hath written with his blood. Write with blood, and thou wilt find that blood is spirit.

—Thus Spake Zarathustra

In his seminal work in philosophical anthropology, *The Mediator: His Strategy for Power** Dr Richard Swartzbaugh has precisely followed Nietzsche's dictum; the book breathes the spirit not only of its author, but of the blood that courses through the arteries of the latent American nation, and which offers the only real hope that America will some day no longer be the name of a rootless population, but of a people. The Mediator is a book for America; it is, as the author has himself described it, "a work about culture which, because it is a work of culture, justifies the culture it is about."

Dr Swartzbaugh maintains that where men or groups do not fundamentally *trust* one another, and yet desire some type of contact, they must call in a third party to "mediate" the relationship. "In being *between* groups," Swartzbaugh asserts, "the mediator cannot be *of* them. His power depends, paradoxically, on the fact that he is an outsider, even an outcast." It is to the advantage of the mediators, then, to make social relationships as abstract and legalistic as possible, so that no contacts can be made without the intervention of a mediating party. Ironically, the mediators exert power not by directly manipulating people, but by manipulating the relationships upon which persons depend.

For Americans the most pervasive form of this mediative function is the State, which Swartzbaugh considers "a kind of *contract* expressed as bureaucracy." The government bureaucracy does not facilitate concrete social relationships; on the contrary, it steps in between individuals to make such relationships impossible. Conversely, the government forces together groups which do not understand each other instinctively. The State realizes that by thus destroying group identities, it increases the individual's dependence upon its own mediative bureaucracy. As Swartzbaugh writes: —

The mediated society is an integrated society. Integration demands the elimination of personal and instinctual ties of men and women of the same limited regional and racial

* *The Mediator: His Strategy for Power*, by Richard Grey Swartzbaugh, Howard Allen Ent., Cape Canaveral, Florida, U.S.A. Pp. 133. Price \$4.95.