Attempts to determine excellence in human endeavor range from the Olympic Games in ancient Greece to the Miss Universe contests of today. In the literary world, one of the largest book dealers of the United Kingdom, the Waterstone Company, in connection with British Television Channel 4, has attempted to identify the twentieth century’s best books. In doing so it has published a list of the one hundred favorites identified in a public opinion poll in which each of 25,000 readers nominated five titles. This sounding of public taste gives an indication of what people in the United Kingdom are reading, not necessarily what journalists and academics believe they should be reading. Apart from stimulating considerable broad-range thinking, the poll constitutes a guide to the major literary themes, genres and ideas prevalent in the century as well as a register of one hundred distinguished books in which they appear. Several important titles may be missing from each category, but every book included is one of the most representative.

It is doubtful that many people would agree that the title receiving the largest number of votes, *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien, is the best book of the century, not because it lacks talent or artistry, but because of the genre to which the book belongs, that of fantasy fiction. Tolkien’s other book on the list, *The Hobbit*, which inhabits the same wonderland as *The Lord of the Rings*, is acknowledged juvenilia. These works have, nevertheless, won favor with adult countercultural groups primarily because they challenge and subvert power and authority. Tolkien’s pseudo-invented language has even been studied by some medievalists, philologists, and seekers of allegories.

That the list contains no poetry is hardly a surprise since serious poets after the Victorian Age have not addressed the general public. T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* came close to making the list, finishing as number 101. It is somewhat of an anomaly, however, that no dramatist garnered enough votes for inclusion, not even Ibsen or Shaw, since the stage still engages considerable public attention, perhaps now more than ever since the advent and perfection of movies and television. Most titles on the list, including the top ten, belong to works of fiction.

Less than one third of the books were published before the mid-century, indicating both the effect of time on producing a consensus and the appeal of the contemporary. Nearly all the older books appear at the top of the list, evidence of the operation of canonization. These pre-1950 books, which are with one exception works of fiction, may have been chosen primarily for their familiarity. Joyce comes fourth; Kafka twenty-second and Proust thirty-third. Besides the latter two, the only works in translation are Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* at 74, Camus’s *The Outsider* at 20, and *The Diary of Anne Frank* at 26. The only other works not from the United Kingdom are American: Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (9) and *Of Mice and Men* (35), Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (12), Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (23), and Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (57). Orwell, who occupies both second and third places, is recognized for three books, along with D. H. Lawrence and E. M. Forster. The only author in the pre-1950 group to have received a Nobel Prize is Steinbeck.

The largest category of books selected consists of novels generally classified as conventional or classic. Not experimental in style, they combine one or more universal themes, characters conforming to their environment or period, and a story-line typical of real-life situations. Characters are believable, plot complications plausible, and narrative develops in a linear fashion. The most familiar authors belong to this group: Graham Greene (2 titles), F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Golding, Camus, D. H. Lawrence (3 titles), Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster (3 titles), Daphne du Maurier, Evelyn Waugh, Boris Pasternak, Virginia Woolf and Laurence Durrell.

Several books in the present decade carry on this classic, linear tradition, including *Possession: A Romance* (37) by A. S. Byatt. Although the subtitle suggests light reading of a sentimental nature, the work, in words from the narrative itself, actually portrays “the whole terror and endeavour of twentieth-century literary scholarship.” The two principal characters are linked by sexual attraction, but the plot concerns a number of academic hangers-on attempting to uncover manuscripts and mementos of a nineteenth-century poet, modeled loosely on Tennyson. The novel has a great deal in common with *The Aspern Papers* by Henry James, who does not appear on the list.

Although not emerging until the last decade, *Possession* has almost no features associated with postmodernism. The same is true of the most recent book on the list, Nicholas Evans’s *The Horse Whisperer* (100), which appeared in 1995 and has been made into a motion picture. In this conventional American novel, the daughter of a wealthy East-Coast couple loses her leg in a riding accident in which her horse is also injured. Her mother becomes sexually involved with a sympathetic horse trainer, who, at the end, driven by a sense of guilt, commits suicide.

*The Remains of the Day* (45) by Kazuo Ishiguro, an ethnic Japanese reared and educated in England, also conforms to the conventional model of the well-made novel. By means of impeccable verisimilitude in style and vocabulary, the first-person narrator, a butler employed in an English country house who seems on first impression to resemble P. G. Wodehouse’s semi-satirical Jeeves, reveals himself as a troubled personality unaware of his own weaknesses.

John Fowles, who makes a point of varying styles from one book to the next, is selected for two studies of character: in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (65) the female protagonist defiantly allows her community to assume erroneously that she has been sexually abused and abandoned, and in *The Magus* (60) a powerful man manipulates events on a small Greek island in order to test the integrity
Presumably all of the fiction on the list with the exception of juvenilia should combine serious themes with stylistic distinction. Those which excel in both qualities, which could indeed be candidates for the Nobel Prize and seem likely to be enshrined in the canon one hundred years from now, are not necessarily, however, those most widely read. A character in one of the least pretentious novels on the list who describes himself as "not the brightest bloke in the world, but certainly not the dimmest" makes a revealing comment about two of the books likely to survive another century: "I have read books like *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*, and understood them, I think (they were about girls, right), but I don't like them very much." These two novels are indeed about girls, but much else. They are also translations from languages other than English, that of Kundera from Czech and that of Garcia Marquez from Spanish. "Lightness" in Kundera’s title refers to the sense of inconsequence or indifference in life as the opposite of "heaviness," which implies gravity or importance. History or chronological time is considered as "light" because it can never be repeated; there is no such thing as the eternal return. Another work on the list, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (24), maintains exactly the opposite. Kundera uses girls to illustrate his theme that the attainment of happiness in company with pleasure is a goal almost impossible to attain. A kindred theme is moral and political, bearing on the post-war occupation of Czechoslovakia by Russian communists. The dilemma the protagonist faces concerns the communists of his own country—did they know about the horrors perpetrated by the communist regime on the Russian people and, if they were ignorant, could they be considered guilty of the treatment accorded to their own countrymen? Using the Oedipus theme as an allegory, he decides that no excuse is ever valid to exculpate an evil deed.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* (43) surveys the culture of a century in the process of chronicling the multitudinous love affairs of a man determined to wait a lifetime until he is free to marry a woman who had rejected him as a youth. The narrative has none of the tricks of magic realism except a doll that grows in size and the unerring olfactory sense of the principal female character that enables her to detect smells not perceptible by anyone else, a theme later developed by Patrick Suskind in *Perfume*. The devices of magic realism come into full play, however, in Garcia Marquez’s earlier *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (8), a family novel covering six generations in which the real and the fantastic join in portraying major themes in Latin American society. Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (42) also transforms historical materials into a modern genre, using a medieval setting as background for a mystery thriller.

Utopias, it seems, have temporarily gone out of fashion; the latest to achieve any degree of popular acceptance was James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*, 1933, which is not on the list. But the three great dystopias of the century, Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (2) and *Animal Farm* (3) together with Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (15), are there, indeed at the very top. A vague dystopia, Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (58), which is sometimes classified as a feminist novel, is the only work by a Canadian author included. It has as its main targets religious fundamentalism and autocratic government. Because of a major decline in population in the United States, the religious right enforces a policy based upon the Old Testament requiring unmarried females of child-bearing age to be enlisted in a military-type corps and farmed out at appropriate periods to barren couples to serve as surrogate wives. The accompanying puritanical values of society as a whole make daily life dreary and desolate.

Vikram Seth’s easy-to-read family novel about contemporary India, *A Suitable Boy* (50), resembles John Galsworthy’s *Forasyme Saga*, which did not make the list. Replete with genealogy, the novel exceeds in length Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (23). Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (25), a similar family saga, also has many characteristics of the historical novel in its constant reference to background events in the political-religious split between India and Pakistan. His more famous and equally brilliant *Satanic Verses* is not on the list, possibly because of the religious controversy with which it is associated. More conventional novels based upon historical events are Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (23) and Robert Graves’s *I, Claudius* (99).

Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (74) portrays the tragedy and fruitlessness of war. The American Joseph Heller in *Catch-22* (5) uses satirical techniques to expose the corruption and inefficiency of military life in World War II. Gunter Grass in *The Tin Drum* (88) extends the satirical process to comprise the vileness and viciousness of the entire German nation in submitting to Nazi ideology. More recently an English author, Louis de Bernieres, blends satire with humor in describing the German-Italian occupation of Greece in World War II in a novel with the unlikely title *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin* (66). Affirming that war is a wonderful thing only in books and the movies, he subjects Italian Fascism to the same withering disdain that Gunter Grass applies to Nazi Germany, using a similar musical symbol in his title.

*The Diary of Anne Frank* (26) records the thoughts of a young Jewish girl hiding from the Nazis in occupied Holland. Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* (54) records a poet’s reaction to the military horrors of World War I and the social displacements of its aftermath. Life in a post-war Soviet labor camp is detailed in a deliberately unsensational manner in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (89), by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, one of the few Nobel Prize winners on the list. His indictment of the cruelty and corruption of the Stalinist regime rests entirely on his unemotional, factual statement, devoid of artificial rhetoric. Shortages in food, firewood, shelter and sleep keep the prisoners in a state of perpetual apathy. *If This is a Man* (30) by an Italian Jew, Primo Levi, resembles Solzhenitsyn’s matter-of-fact style as it demonstrates that the routine of incessant labor, lack of food and sleep, and deprivation of freedom suffered by political prisoners are greater tortures than deliberate brutality. The carefully planned purpose of Auschwitz, where he was an inmate, was to annihilate the masculinity of its victims before killing them. The title raises the question whether humanity itself has been demolished.

Brian Keenan in *An Evil Cradling* (84) concentrates on the mind of single individuals who are incarcerated in tiny cells without light or other forms of stimulation. A native of Belfast, Ireland, Keenan was kidnapped by the Arab Jihad while teaching at the American University of Beirut. His reminiscences of various hide-outs where he witnessed extreme brutality and torture combine lessons learned from books with those from his own suffering and hallucinations. His work reveals the psychological effects of political terrorism as it analyzes both Arab and Irish minds.
This is his way of coping with technology. But does not, like the hippies, propose degeneracy, but rather dedication to spiritual ends, which for him lead to Buddha, the Godhead.

Robert M. Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (68) also attempts to purvey philosophical truth in the guise of light reading. Because of the appearance in the 1970s and the word “motorcycle” in its title, it has been associated with hippies and the beat generation, but the culture it promotes is that of Eastern Buddhism, including reincarnation. Although inculcating a high regard for theoretical science, Pirsig advocates a culture based on what is best rather than on what is new. He rejects material success, but does not, like the hippies, propose degeneracy, but rather dedication to spiritual ends, which for him lead to Buddha, the Godhead. This is his way of coping with technology.
The list does include a representative of the American Beat movement, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (14), which occupies a relatively high position slightly above the only work stemming from French Existentialism, Camus's *The Outsider* (20). Kerouac's novel has in common with Sartre the view that man defines himself through his actions. Kerouac also compares his first-person narrative style to that of Proust—except that his ambiance is different, "written on the run instead of afterwards in a sickbed." Kerouac's material consists of sex, drink and drugs, but serious themes do emerge, for example, Americanism as represented by the transcendentalists and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, number twelve on the list. Kerouac depicts characters "whose minds work in infinite clockwork," preceding Anthony Burgess in doing so. And he links his title *On the Road* to Lao Tse's *Tao-teh-ching* of ancient China.

Sex, drink, and drugs are carried to extremes in two later novels, completely devoid of any redeeming philosophical meaning. Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* (78) portrays the drug culture from within, using street language to vindicate cheating, stealing, and violence while providing a pharmacology of every common hallucinatory substance. The same glorification of drugs appears in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (77), but the ambiance is that of big money and Wall Street. Vocabulary overflows with references to ultra-expensive designer clothes, hi-fi equipment, and chic restaurants. The narrator, a psychopathic murderer, finds pleasure in torturing and killing attractive sex partners and strangers from the street. The British equivalent in bad taste to *American Psycho* is Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory* (32), the interior monologue of an emotionally disturbed youth, who believes that at an early age he had been castrated by a dog's bite, but who is actually a girl reared by her father on male hormones. The narrator and his/her older brother derive their greatest pleasure from torturing and killing animals and insects.

Books on moral reform deal primarily with injustices to blacks and the working class. *Cry, the Beloved Country*, *A Story of Comfort in Desolation* (94) by Alan Paton treats race relations in South Africa in the 1940s from a humanitarian point of view while presenting arguments pro and con for segregation, education, and political equality. In this third-person novel, the son of a black Anglican priest turns bad, steals, murders a benevolent white man, impregnates a young girl, and is eventually hanged. His father visits him in prison, learns all the shocking details, but despite everything retains his Christian faith. The author's enlightened Anglicanism envisions an eventual solution through the cooperation of the races. Nelson Mandela, the contemporary black leader, looks back in *Long Walk to Freedom* (90) on South Africa's victorious struggle for political equality. A white American woman, Harper Lee, gives a sugar-coated portrayal of racism similar to Paton's in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (7), which won a Pulitzer Prize. Using the narrative voice of a nine-year-old white girl, she depicts a virtuous Southern lawyer defending a black man unjustly accused of raping a white woman. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (18) describes American black culture in a realistic style with colloquial language concerning sexual relationships, including incest and lesbianism. The tone, however, is highly optimistic, suggesting that women with a will to do may conquer all obstacles.

Toni Morrison in *Beloved* (36) portrays a black woman in the wake of the Civil War fleeing the deep South to Ohio. In a somewhat contrived style of psychological analysis, Morrison concentrates equally on the blessings of female bonding and the evils of racial discrimination.

John Steinbeck's portrayal of the ordeal of the rural poor during the great American depression in *The Grapes of Wrath* (9) is a classic of social realism. A British proletarian novel from an earlier age, Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (62), originally published in 1914, has recently had a notable revival. The "ragged trousered philanthropists" are the workers who slave at starvation wages for the financial benefit of their employers. The novel chronicles the privations of the working poor, who constantly worry that each day at their miserable underpaid jobs will be their last. The same period is portrayed in Laurie Lee's *Cider with Rosie* (56), but from a completely opposite perspective. Presumably based upon the author's reminiscences of his boyhood in an English country village, the book describes cheerful people and comfortable surroundings.

Both Tressell and Lee portray the working class as noble and virtuous, but fiction later in the century presents a somewhat different picture. Even the angry young men of the post World War II generation represented by Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (70) are angels compared to the hooligans in *A Clockwork Orange* (27) by Anthony Burgess. The title derives from the "application of mechanistic morality to a living organism varying with juice and sweetness." The protagonist, 15 years old at the outset, 18 at the end, violates a young virgin to the sound of Beethoven's Ninth symphony, murders an old woman, and is sent to jail where his evil tendencies are made even worse by the extreme brutality he encounters. As part of a brain-washing treatment, he is forced over long periods to watch movies of slaughter and pornography. The story is told in what is presumably Cockney slang, but is closer to the linguistic deviations found in Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. Far more substantial is Burgess's *Earthly Powers* (98), the saga of a homosexual litteratus, whose personal links with a precursor who eventually becomes Pope take him to many of the major cities in Europe, America, and Africa. The complicated plot involves the coexistence of good and evil in the upper levels of society.

Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (95) portrays the language and attitudes of fervent aficionados of "pop" music of the last thirty years. Concerned primarily with the love affairs and problems of average young Englishmen, the narrative seriously reflects on death and grief. Roddy Doyle's *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (75) uses middle-class slang to narrate a small Irish boy's reminiscences. Although recipient of a Booker prize in 1993, the work has no central theme except class and adolescence, the latter portrayed primarily through naive sexual references. If William Golding's portrayal of boyhood in *Lord of the Flies* (13) is high tragedy, Doyle's is burlesque. The same author's *The Van* (96), which appears further down the list, treats the middle-aged generation of the same economic status and culture. Scottish lower class slang represents the main attraction of *Trainspotting* (10) by Irvine Welsh, the characters of which are merely ten or twelve years older than Doyle's. Its position as tenth on the list is as anomalous as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as first, the latter an example of preciosity and the former of vulgarity. J. D. Salinger's realistic and sympathetic portrayal of the problems of adolescence, *The Catcher in the Rye* attained eighth place, corresponding to its classic status in the United States.

Modern works of satire seldom reach the heights of the masterpieces of Cervantes, Moliere, Swift, or even Dickens, and thus rarely become popular favorites, but three are represented on the Waterstone list, two of which have already become classics, *Lolita* (31) by Vladimir Nabokov and *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller. The third, *The Master and Margarita* (63) by Mikhail Bulgakov was written during the height of Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union, but not published until the anti-Stalinist reaction of the 1960s. Primarily a burlesque of the
My citing of works in the New York list absent from Waterstone's is not intended as criticism of the latter. The library's list is considerably

Some of the diabolical characters resemble the fiendish characters of Stephen King's horror-inspiring *It* (70) and *The Stand* (73). In defense of the latter choices, it could be noted that a considerable amount of King's appeal derives not from the shocking subject matter, but from his realistic, occasionally humorous, descriptions of everyday life and familiar surroundings. While King combines terror with realism, Patrick Suskind in *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (53) joins horror with fantasy. In this shocker translated from the German, the protagonist, a deformed bastard in eighteenth-century France, has as his only asset an acute sense of smell, allowing him to learn the art of perfumery. He becomes enamored of the scent of a pre-pubescent girl in Grasse, the center of the perfume industry, and murders her and twenty-four other virgins. He then escapes to Paris, but in Kafkaesque fashion is eaten alive by a mob he thinks is worshipping him.

Although the genres of biography and autobiography are extremely popular in light-reading and television, they are remarkably scarce in the list. Considered most significant is Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* (11), which depicts the mutual support of three generations of women. A grandmother, sold in her girlhood as a concubine by her father, arranges a conventional marriage for her daughter, who in turn helps her own daughter (the author) to escape from communist China. All three characters are presented as victors over male domination. Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (59) and George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (86) from the first half of the century also offer the ingredients of personal narrative as do Keroouac and Pirsig from the second half.

Apart from juvenilia, no category exists for books notable for nothing but amusement, but Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City* (64) fits this description in its collection of single chapter vignettes, chiefly dialogues, that offer a glimpse of middle-class life in San Francisco of the 1970s.

A list similar to Waterstone's but preceding it by a few months appeared in the United States, compiled, however, by a group of professional librarians rather than based on a public opinion poll. Under the title *The New York Public Library’s Books of the Century*, the work commemorates the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the library in 1895. Instead of mirroring public taste or popular culture, it was designed as a historical survey of the major areas of intellectual endeavor, as selection rather than election. The list of 159 titles is half again as long as Waterstone's, divided into eleven categories, including Economics and Technology; War, Holocaust, Totalitarianism; Optimism; Popular Culture; and Landmarks of Modern Literature. The list does not rank titles according to numbers of votes, but the introduction indicates that the two works receiving the largest number of individual recommendations were Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The various choices, according to the introduction, "though certainly diverse, represent a perspective that is urban, American, and profoundly concerned with issues of social justice and freedom of expression." The introduction draws no hard and fast distinctions between the perception of the common reader and that of the professional or pundit, but makes the valid point that standards for either are ambiguous. Quoting one person's objection that "the choices are arbitrary and no criteria are given for them," the introduction suggests that one cannot "define an objective, quantifiable set of tests that only great books could pass." Even if one could do so, individual taste based on personal experience and cultural prejudice would still play a major role.

The category "Landmarks of Modern Literature" is obviously of primary interest. Out of the twenty-seven authors that appear in both the Waterstone and the New York Public lists, only eight appear in the landmark category of the latter list: Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Fitzgerald, Woolf, Nabokov, Kerouac, and Garcia Marquez. The other nineteen include dramatic works by Chekhov, Pirandello, Shaw and Beckett and poetry by Milay, Yeats, Eliot and Lorca. Among the other authors in this category, the only one generally considered to be on a level with Proust and Nabokov is Thomas Mann for his *The Magic Mountain*. Two English authors of considerable reputation not in Waterstone are listed in other categories, Winston Churchill in that of history for *The Gathering Storm* and Beatrix Potter for the juvenile classic *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.

The selection is more representative of New York City than of America as a whole, probably one of the reasons that there is no Hong Kingston, Amy Tan or Armistead Maupin, but instead a provincial novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith. The Afro-American poet and dramatist Langston Hughes is represented not by his verse, but by extracts from his column in a Harlem newspaper. Surprisingly Kundera is missing, perhaps because of his ridicule of American *kitsch* in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. There is, on the other hand, a book on sport, Jim Bouton's *Ball Four*, about major-league baseball. The editors note that some of the titles do not even seem to be "books" at all, for example, the *United Nations Charter or The Whole Internet Users’ Guide*. They do not cite as an anachronistic selection, The Holy Bible, presumably justifying its inclusion on the circumstance that the edition indicated is the Revised Standard Version. They vindicate the presence of some books of influence even though poorly written and others having an almost evil influence, giving as illustrations Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Mao Zedon's *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. The latter is the only Chinese book on the list, and there is none from Japan. The areas of American cuisine and good manners are represented by a cookbook *The Joy of Cooking* by Irma S. Rombauer and *Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics, and at Home* by Emily Post. Both are presented in the category "Optimism, Joy, Gentility" along with some well-known British writers, not in Waterstone: P. G. Wodehouse, G. K. Chesterton and George Bernard Shaw.

Eleven books appear under the category "Women Rise," with only Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* duplicated in Waterstone. Early works in the century by Carrie Chapman Catt and Margaret Sanger, *Woman Suffrage and Politics* and *My Fight for Birth Control* respectively, are followed by those of more recent feminists, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, and Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique*. "Colonialism" is represented by Gandhi's *Non-Violent Resistance*, but Edward Said's *Orientalism* is missing.

My citing of works in the New York list absent from Waterstone's is not intended as criticism of the latter. The library's list is considerably
longer. Also the two were compiled in different ways, one by popular vote, the other by the suggestions of professional librarians. Their objectives are consequently different, those of one to register popularity, of the other to indicate historical significance. Some books on the New York list may not even have enjoyed high circulation, but have made outstanding contributions to knowledge or culture. The primary goal of the Waterstone project was to survey what is being read now; that of the library to indicate historical value. Both reveal the lapse of time. Works already accepted as classic or traditional dominate the earlier period, but experimental and innovative works flourish in the later. Those of the first half of the century in both lists could well be summarized as "Landmarks" and those of the second half as "Trends." Despite the efforts of some literary critics to manufacture and exploit criteria of difference in the last two decades, the only substantial innovation has been the unifying of philosophy and fiction by such writers as Kundera, Garcia Marquez and John Irving. It is too soon, however, to decide which books of the second half of the century will evolve into the classics of the twenty-first.

* A. Owen Aldridge is Professor Emeritus of Literature and former Director of the Program in Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. [Back]
A twentieth-century classic, Appointment in Samarra is the first and most widely read book by the writer Fran Leibowitz called "the real F. Scott Fitzgerald." U.S.A. (trilogy) by John Dos Passos. A collection of three novels—The 42nd Parallel, 1919, and The Big Money—this work by Dos Passos combines the stories of different characters with current events, small biographies of famous men, and stream-of-consciousness moments to create a portrait of the United States itself. Complete with a wise donkey, rebellious hens, and suspiciously urbane pigs, this book is considered one of the best satires of all time. THE GOLDEN BOWL by Henry James. The Golden Bowl is the story of the rich American Adam Verver, and his daughter, Maggie.