

news—more stories on the views of Right and Left, of teachers and businessmen, parents and children, employers and employees. He is not optimistic.

Arts & Letters

**THE NABOKOV-WILSON
LETTERS: Correspondence
Between Vladimir Nabokov
and Edmund Wilson,
1940–1971**

edited by Simon Karlinsky
Harper, 1979
346 pp. \$15
L of C 78-69627
ISBN 0-06-012262-5

THE HABIT OF BEING

by Flannery O'Connor
edited by Sally Fitzgerald
Farrar, 1979
617 pp. \$15
L of C 78-11559
ISBN 0-374-16769-9

Novelist Vladimir Nabokov and critic Edmund Wilson engaged in much-publicized disputes—about Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (Wilson praised it; Nabokov considered it pulp fiction), about Nabokov's *Lolita* (which Wilson liked "less than anything" Nabokov wrote). Yet they were close friends, as their letters make clear. In 1945, "Bunny" Wilson, who helped the Russian expatriate get writing assignments at the *New Republic*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*, wrote to "Volodya" Nabokov: "Our conversations have been among the few consolations of my literary life through these last years." Nabokov shared with Wilson his sketches, some of which found their way into *Lolita* (1955) and *Invitation to a Beheading* (1957), of odd and sundry Americans: a drama teacher who resembled the Duchess of Windsor, a timid bachelor who purchased a 75-foot flagpole for his backyard, a foul-mouthed bigot talking to two soldiers on a train.

Vladimir Nabokov "impressed, even possibly influenced" me, wrote Flannery O'Connor. Given their disparate backgrounds and writing styles, it is a surprising connection. O'Connor, born and bred in rural Georgia, a practicing Roman Catholic who wrote in the Southern gothic tradition, is best known for her collections of short stories—*A Good Man Is Hard to Find* (1956) and *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965). She died in 1964 at age 39, the victim of lupus erythematosus, an incurable disease of metabolic origin. Collected here, her letters attest to her courage and stoicism in facing her invalidism, her uncompromising belief in Catholicism, and her self-confidence. Novelist John Hawkes once asked her why she wrote, and she snapped back, "Because I'm good at it." The letters—to friends, readers, other writers—are folksy,

full of local news, and funny. She recounts a literary conversation with her mother: "'Who is this Kafka?' she says. . . . A German Jew, I says, I think. He wrote a book about a man that turns into a roach. 'Well, I can't tell people *that*,' she says. . . ."

**BLUE WINE AND OTHER
POEMS**

by John Hollander
Johns Hopkins, 1979
71 pp. \$8.95 cloth,
\$3.95 paper
L of C 78-20514
ISBN 0-8018-2209-2
0-8018-2221-1 pbk

Hollander, a Yale professor of English, writes some of contemporary America's most intriguing verse, at once scholarly and accessible, humorous and meditative. *Blue Wine* offers a range of tones—from speculations on painting and sculpture to unabashedly lyrical love poems. The title work was inspired by a row of bottles that Hollander saw in *New Yorker* artist Saul Steinberg's kitchen, decorated with "mock (or rather visionary) wine labels." The poet bore the vision of these homeward, "In the clear cup of his own eye, to see what he will see." His meditations—in 11 distinct styles, including mock-Homeric—sound the relation of life to art, the boundaries between the seen and the unseen. In "A Statue of Something," Hollander gives a clue to what this collection is about: *He is leading his model out into interpretation, / Life afier art, re-engagement with a world whose shadows / Are insubstantial and always full of motion.*

**BLOOMSBURY: A House
of Lions**

by Leon Edel
Lippincott, 1979
288 pp. \$12.95
L of C 79-4341
ISBN 0-397-10043-5

In 1906, the Stephen sisters, Vanessa (Bell) and Virginia (Woolf), and their brother Thoby were living in London's "antiquated, ex-fashionable" Bloomsbury district. As a student at Cambridge, Thoby met future economist John Maynard Keynes, writer Leonard Woolf, biographer Lytton Strachey, art critic Clive Bell, and literary critic Desmond MacCarthy. Before he died, Thoby introduced them to his sisters. Later joined by painters Roger Fry and Duncan Grant, this group began meeting on Thursday nights to read poetry and discuss art, politics, sex. Drawn together by common interests in art and philosophy (as agnostics, they were all influenced by G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell) and by a penchant for unconventional