It is hardly necessary to say that R. A. Brandt is original: nothing that he puts on paper could possibly have been conceived and executed by anyone else. I deliberately use "conceived" and "executed" together, for one of the great qualities of this artist's work is the perfect interrelation of subject and form it displays. The technique seems simple—the related greys, or, in his colour work (mainly for children), the bold tonal blocks: but infinite care lies behind an execution which, so absolutely, so inevitably, expresses the thought and atmosphere of his imagination.

Brandt is essentially an "imaginer". His work is subjective, it comes "out of his head". But it is not a head stuck blindly in the clouds: Brandt has lived—and he goes on living in everything he puts on paper. His work is endlessly an expression of impression. But it is no field of daffodils recollected in tranquillity—it is a vital outpouring of vivid (and sometimes, obviously, painful) experience.

Most of his published work is book illustration; yet, unlike most illustrators, he is not only an interpreter. It is as if he entirely devoured and digested a writer's thought, reconceived it in terms of his own medium, and gave it in new birth as one of his own children, with his likeness inevitably upon it. He thus complements his authors—he even amplifies them.

Brandt has been criticized for being "horrible". He is not horrible: the people who find his work horrible are horrible. Brandt himself—judged properly from his work—is singularly pure. His creatures are not haunting figures from neurotic nightmare: they are the inventions of a free imagination that sees the world with a lofty, detached penetration and records, without comment, human character and experience. He is not a caricaturist—not even in the great sense that Daumier was a caricaturist: it is not misanthropy that is his mainspring—he is impelled by a profound sympathy for humanity—his imagination feeds direct from life itself, whether good or bad, repulsive or glorious in its manifestation: in short, he is Rabelaisian.

And it is no paradox to say in this context that some of his best work has been done for children. I have spoken about the "purity" of his imagination. Plainly, then, this quality has fullest play in a world where all is imagination and all is pure (and do not decry me of being sentimental: I know what the psychologists say about the child imagination, and of course, from their point of view, they are right—but not from the child's). Brandt's work for children is a perfect expression of how a child thinks and imagines: I am referring particularly to his series of plates, THE STORY OF A TREE (see Graphis No. 64). Yet it is the child made articulated given form in its thought. It is not surrealism on the one hand, or elaborate, sophisticated and nostalgic over-simplification on the other. A child will recognize the world of Brandt as its own world; but besides, there will be a touch of reverence in the (quite unconscious) realization that this older child who has drawn the world, not only lives in it, but understands it—and makes others understand it.

All this is eulogy, but it is no inflated eulogy. I think Brandt himself would be very surprised—even a little dared—to find that anyone could honestly think and say these things about him as an artist. He is, of course, aware of what he is doing—every true artist is: but though he is self-conscious in this sense, he is no egotist obsessed with the importance and value of his own work. He is a man who draws because it seems to him natural to draw—it is the only thing to do about life. He must, quite simply (though with infinite technical care), put down what he knows about things—what he feels about ideas, for he is in no sense a doctrinaire: no—what he knows about trees, and tables, and flowers; what he knows about shapes (and he knows a great deal about shapes); above all, what he knows about people—and he knows a great, great deal about people. Yet I do not think he knows quite how much he knows. He is only Brandt, busy and happy in being Brandt. The appropriate image to express him is the image of the unscathed child in the valley of the shadow. He exercises his dreams (and ours) by drawing them before they appear. His art is the art of the World, the Flesh—and the Angels.