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Painting and Reality (Bollingen Series XXXV: A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 4) by Etienne Henry Gilson. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957. Pp. xxiv + 367. \$7.50.

As I sit at my typewriter before a pristine page bearing only title and names of the author and publishers of the book I would review, I am transported to thoughts of the author about the theory of privation, and wonder what form this review should take, what sort of thing it will become, and, because the purpose of books is to stir men's minds, I find myself pondering again the mysteries of understanding. Why have so many thousands of words been penned explaining painting? Admittedly, it speaks for itself in its own terms. That painters continue to paint attests that it is still a living art. Books which explain art are books about words. In a world where feeling seems suspect, where material values alone seem respectable, such books all too often have an odor of propaganda; a sort of frontal attack on the Philistines, replete with diversionary actions, smoke screens which envelop positions theoretically rendering them invisible to assault, all on the theory that the best defense is to attack.

Painting and Reality is not such a work. It is, I believe, a work with which to reckon, the mature work of an acknowledged scholar. Etienne Gilson is the author of books in the fields of history, philosophy, and metaphysics, and this particular book rounds out his writings by adding a serious work in the field of aesthetics. His intimacy with all schools of philosophy and with the writings of artists, his ease and precision of expression, his insight into and sympathy with the creative artist, and above all the integrity of the book cut through a great deal of the mystique in recent writings on aesthetics. He grinds no axes, though the Thomist background of the man and an aura of Apologetics break through the writing now and then, not to injure its objectivity, but to enrich the object. In the whole of the book there is but one curious lapse, which I shall mention later.

Painting and Reality is a good book, a significant book. Carefully read and pondered it has much comfort for the creative artist. It can give him assurance as to the worth and dignity of his work and the permanence and effect of his creations and, as consequence, a better understanding of his status with attendant self-respect. It explains what to an artist always seems the fickleness of his public. It accounts for the interest in, or lack of interest in, what is known as "subject" in painting by a clear explanation of the idea. There is about the book a two-fold air—the patient step by step building of a reasoned concept, and the rich insights of a man of taste. Mr. Gilson leaves little to chance. He defines his terms with precision and generally notes exceptions.

It is this latter habit that is disconcerting to the reviewer. It leaves him little with which to quarrel. He deals with critics with some adroitness. After admitting a positive role for the critic, in which he is permitted to point out perceived reality, he adds:

If a bad painting is something that, as a work of art, has failed to achieve actual existence, negative criticism can do little more than either to overlook the presence of a reality that escapes the eye of the critic or else futilely to point out the empty place where something that ought to be there is not to be found. Now, there is no way to prove that something does not exist: between what one does not see and what is really not there, the distinction is not easy to make. . . . (p. 132)

This pungent statement has real meaning in the context of the book—for reality is not left to chance, and as applied to a work of art is by no means all embracing. Becoming does not mean become, and being is a state which must be recognized as having all the potentials of existence. A painting that has become has achieved reality and possesses a force co-existent but not necessarily co-equal with other beings. There is here a clear signal for positive criticism and a challenge, unless one would be quarrelsome, for understanding.

The folly of saying how a book should have been written by an author, or a painting painted by a painter, is nonsense *qua* nonsense. There is purpose, however, in saying, though it cannot change in one iota the work under discussion, what a work means to an individual. The interplay of ideas between beings is both the basis of learning and the wine of life. If the traveler who has made a journey returns, he may ease those about to commence with helpful data. He may mark the springs where they may rest and be refreshed, and above all his assurance that the far places are really there may prevent the novice from turning back just short of goal.

It is with this thought in mind I relate my own journey through this book. It proved something of an adventure. In a busy creative and administrative life, a lifelong habit of reading can be indulged only with restraint. Books read tend more and more to be technical and specific in character, less philosophical and abstract. Consequently, at first I found the going rough and seemingly circuitous. Written as lectures and revised for publication, how extensively I do not know, the text first moves with a slowness that left me impatient. There is a great care given to definitions. Ideas are handled like bricks being laid in a wall.

In retrospect one sees how firm is the wall, how stout and true, and how carefully made are the bricks—but like most building processes the time of building seems long, which served to remind me that “great experiences are not only undergone, they are chosen and suffered.” A less determined reader could weary of the pace and abandon his interest, which would be a loss to himself.

There is, too, extensive use of footnote *en page* quotations from authors or references, always well chosen, which a reader like myself must habitually run down. These are too conveniently placed. Often exciting they encourage digressions, pleasant roads leading elsewhere. There is a danger here of dalliance which should not be given “too much rein” when there is serious business at hand. Such time consuming excursions might be lessened if the notes were placed more inconveniently at the back of the book to be perused with leisure after the text. There is no other quarrel with format. The book is well designed, cleanly printed, beautifully annotated; it includes an extensive bibliography and a superb index.

And what is special about *Painting and Reality*? The most provocative idea, in contrast to a long history of writers who have attempted to synthesize all of the arts under one rationale is Mr. Gilson's clear attempt to prove that

painting is a very special art with a nature uniquely its own and a reality which is in itself special. The limitations embodied in this idea make his conclusions much more understandable. The implications are that in trying to find single solutions applicable to diverse and sometimes contradictory natures, we too often set ourself impossible or needless tasks. He begins immediately, under the general heading of *Physical Existence*, to make clear his preoccupation with the art of painting:

The ontological nature of this approach to the study of painted works of art entails limitations to which philosophers and art critics rarely consent to submit. They are fond of talking about art in general, itself considered as an expression of what they call "poetry," that is, in the universal sense of the word, the primary process that is "the secret of each and of all arts." (J. Maritain) From this lofty point of view, there is no reason not to consider reflections about the plastic arts as directly relevant to "poetry" understood in the universal sense that has just been defined. *Not so in our own inquiry. Starting as we do from the fact that paintings are, or exist, we have no right to assume that their mode of existence has anything in common with that of other works of art.* (p. 4)

The italics are mine. From this point onward the reader is never allowed to forget the special nature of painting. There are no invidious comparisons, just a structuring of existence in all its aspects with unusual perceptiveness.

Best of all and most rewarding to the mature reader is this perceptiveness. In developing his thesis Mr. Gilson leads us through a maze of historical concepts and writings of individuals concerning the arts. The hand of the experienced teacher is ever present, briefing ideas of great men, pointing out the changes which time has worked on accepted theories. *Painting and Reality* makes no pretense at historicity, but through analogy and illustration manages to bring most of the western aesthetics into brief focus. Particularly so in reference to modern art and its special problems. This is one of the few books which put these into mesh with classical philosophy. All of which makes the reading of this book a distinctly worthwhile effort and a very real pleasure. I find myself referring to ideas expressed in it again and again in my thoughts.

And now I come to what is to me a disturbing lapse. On page 294-5 there is in the textual matter dealing with "picturing" distinct from "painting" properly so called, a brief and essentially unimportant apology for the use of this in "Christian worship." As the preceding text deals largely with non-representational painting perhaps this is to justify the use of the "imitational," but it would seem to give sanction to a kind of effort that all too often makes our churches ugly. By no other word in the text could I sense that true art could not or would not lend a dignity, reverence, and atmosphere to any sanctuary, the effect of which could heighten religious experience. Coming so near the end of the book this step backward leaves me a little shaken. I wish it had been omitted.

THEODORE J. PRICHARD

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Stewards of Excellence by A. Alvarez. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.
Pp. 191. \$3.50.

In *Stewards of Excellence*, A. Alvarez has collected eight of his own essays on modern English and American poets—Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Empson, Auden, Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, D. H. Lawrence, and, by way of example, Frost, Robert Lowell and Richard Eberhart. He sees the essays as evincing two central concerns: "first, since twentieth-century poetry has depended so much on the combination of English and American influences, what are some of the essential differences between the two traditions? Second, why have the great creative possibilities of modern poetry come, in fact, to so little?" He gives the answer that the difference lies in the American poets' preoccupation with discovering or forging a tradition—an activity which has left them considerably more limited in their effectiveness than are the English poets.

This proposition, as it is scarcely new or startling, should allow the reader to concentrate on the shrewd observations Mr. Alvarez has to make about individual poets—as, for instance, that Frost is not a nature poet but "a country poet, whose business is to live with nature rather than through it." Or that Stevens' poems center around the moment at which observed particulars come alive: "And this is not a projection of the poet's self. It is a moment of purity when what is grasped is neither the commotion at the surface of the thing observed nor the commotion inside the observer. It is something that sparks between them: an essential imaginative life." Or what he points to as Empson's invention for writing "complex poetry almost without metaphor . . . by a kind of grammatical stutter which fixed attention upon those thin, weightless little words which are normally hardly noticed. . . ." Such pieces of observation are fresh and shrewd and rewarding.

They are given less weight, however, because of a controlling central proposition I find overriding the less controversial one he states, and that is that the best English poets, confident in a tradition, have worked toward "a naked personal strength" which the Americans, because of their preoccupation with finding out what it was to be American, have not attained. In the light of this thesis, Yeats and D. H. Lawrence and even Empson come out well, and something may be said for Hart Crane alone among the Americans. In Yeats, Lawrence, and Crane, at their best, Mr. Alvarez sees "a complete truth to feeling," unhampered by the search for form.

Probably the best essay in this book is that on D. H. Lawrence, for the effect of "naked personal strength" results, in Mr. Alvarez's thinking, from the single cause of having no preconceptions about technical form, and that condition is most completely satisfied in Lawrence's verse. The evidence of his generalizations about the rhythmic qualities in Lawrence's verse is the weakest part of that discussion; that I consider it weak is merely a further indication of my fundamental disagreement with his central proposition.

In an essay appearing in *The American Scholar* for the Summer, 1959, Mr. Alvarez defines the kind of criticism he approves, what he calls "primary criticism"—"criticism that, as rationally, deliberately and lucidly as possible, gives a sense of what the poetry is like." Mr. Alvarez performs this task for Lawrence's poetry, arriving at a concluding statement which should help one to read Lawrence's poetry with increased appreciation:

In place of the old patterns the modern poet has to rely far more heavily on his own native intelligence, on his ability to feel accurately, without conceit or indulgence; to feel, that is, when he has "thrown his feelings down the drain." He is left then not with a vague blur of emotions or a precise, empty dialectic, but with the essential thread that runs beneath the confusion, with "the instant; the quick." This, I believe, is the real material of poetry, material which could not take any other form. This inner logic is quite as difficult as its older formal counterpart. It depends on getting close to the real feelings and presenting them without formulae and without avoidance, in all their newness, disturbance and ugliness. If a poet does that he will not find himself writing in Lawrence's style; but, like Lawrence, he may speak out in his own voice, single and undisguised.

In this essay, the critic, it seems to me, is performing expert primary criticism. And I would agree that the accurate tracing of emotional shifts and balances may furnish proper subject-matter for poems which may be organized as he has here described.

But this is scarcely the only subject-matter or the only way of setting it down. The singleness of such a standard, especially as Mr. Alvarez attempts to establish its rightness, leads him to discuss a rather strange list of poets. Yeats and Eliot would be universally conceded as "stewards of excellence"; and Pound and Auden have been recognizably active in proposing standards. But the others are arbitrary choices, made, I suspect, to demonstrate his central thesis. His discussion of Wallace Stevens, for instance, begins and ends with the contrast he wishes to make to Lawrence: "Early on, Stevens seems to have discovered the theme of his poetry; he played variations on it throughout the rest of his work. Lawrence's gift was to remain continually available to experience." So that, in the end, Mr. Alvarez is able to praise only those poems in which, ambition forgotten, Stevens can allow a relaxation into "a slighter and more personal perfection."

Mr. Alvarez writes easily and confidently, and his sensitivity and intelligence shine through his manifest prejudices against poems that move in a realm he does not understand, or, understanding in part, cannot approve.

His attempt to return the criticism of poetry to its subject-matter is worthy. The tendency to limit the approved subject-matter to the personal and autobiographical is more questionable.

CHESTER H. CABLE

Wayne State University

Camus by Germaine Brée. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1959. Pp. x + 225. \$5.00.

These are still early days for a book-length study of Albert Camus, and many previous attempts have suffered from a lack of distance and perspective in which the writer's work may be situated. Germaine Brée is as well equipped as anyone in the United States to study Camus and his art; her book is an important contribution and it commands attention from all who are seriously concerned with the interpretation of contemporary literature.

Miss Brée's study of Camus consists of 24 relatively brief chapters, and falls into two main parts: *sa vie, son œuvre*. The biographical presentation covers chapters one through six; the subsequent chapters deal with the genres of Camus' *œuvre* within a loose chronological pattern: early essays, fiction, drama, and later essays. This organization makes for lucidity and ease of exposition, but again and again, the very brevity of each chapter tends to prevent the author from probing as deeply as she might into the implications of a particular work. At its best, Miss Brée's book constitutes a high-level popularization of its subject, but the fragmentary and piece-meal character of her discussion is disconcerting, and the strict separation of one work from another results in an atomization of Camus' writing, so that the connections between, say, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and *L'Etranger* or *Caligula* receive only casual examination.

This fragmentation and dissociation of one work from another is in fact the expression of the author's deep conviction that Camus is primarily an artist rather than a philosopher, and that his ideas are in themselves of only secondary importance. Without dissenting from this point of view, one may wonder if the opposition of philosophy and art is as rigorous in Camus' case as Miss Brée would have us believe. By discussing *L'Etranger* in Chapter 13 and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* in Chapter 20, she loses the opportunity of defining and clarifying the rich and vital interaction of the two works. Camus has succeeded far more than most writers of our time in converting ideas into imaginative expression, but to approach this expression through literary genres is to suggest an artificial heterogeneity and disunity in the totality of his work. I wonder if Miss Brée's study would not have been more substantial if she had followed a genetic or more rigorously thematic pattern of organization. As is, the book is too much of an introductory essay, too much concerned with information and with summaries, and too restricted in its framework.

It may be too soon for us to have a study of Camus from a comparative and international perspective. Miss Brée is well aware of the role of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, of Gide and Kafka, of Malraux and Faulkner, in Camus' art, but only rarely does her discussion of his literary backgrounds and affinities, and the forces shaping his development, move outside of France. She says virtually nothing about the question of the role of recent American fictional techniques in *L'Etranger*—a debatable issue, but one that should not be passed over. Her remarks on Dostoevsky and Camus are suggestive but remain only *aperçus*, and while she recognizes the importance of Nietzsche in Camus' intellectual development, she offers little by way of concrete illumination of their relationship. Perhaps these matters are not appropriate to an introductory study, but their absence points out how completely Miss Brée has concentrated on a presentation of Camus from within.

From this standpoint, there is much to reward a careful reading of the book. The author was fortunate in obtaining the active collaboration of her subject. Camus' notebooks and manuscripts are explored here for the first time, and they are used effectively to illuminate his works. The account of Camus' first novel, *La Mort heureuse*, is particularly valuable for its revelation of his early literary preoccupations and for the measure of the distance of Camus' development which it provides. The same is true for his early dramatic endeavors. The sheer abundance of new and exciting information makes this book indispensable.

As with almost any critical study, there is bound to be some questioning of individual interpretations and judgments. Meursault emerges in Miss Brée's pages as a passive, unheroic, and unsympathetic figure; to me, he seems far more intelligent and more likeable, and in the final pages, more heroic, than Miss Brée seems to find him—but I should add that our sympathy with Meursault stems in part from our knowledge that he did not commit a premeditated murder, and his character is revealed as much in brief flashes of insight that suggest a deep reserve of powerful intelligence as in articulated reflection or statement. In interpreting Meursault's intelligence, one should emphasize Camus' art of dramatic suppression rather than charge his hero with stupidity or incomprehension.

Other matters of judgment also invite comment. Miss Brée moves rather lightly over *L'Etranger*—to my mind Camus' best work—and emphasizes *La Peste* all out of proportion to its merits. *La Peste* may indeed be humanistic in implication, but it is certainly not concrete in its evocation of experience, certainly not "the most disturbing, most moving novel yet to have come out of the chaos of the mid-century." If *La Peste* is over-rated, the plays are clearly under-rated. Miss Brée is at her best in her discussion of Camus in the theatre, but it is not fair to reduce the plays to dialogues of the mind, to "the décor of a mental universe." I should agree that the best of them is *Caligula*, but time may prove it to be an even better play than she admits; the concluding sentence—Caligula's defiant cry, "Je suis encore vivant!"—is not simply an evocation of the terror of recent history, but a passionate assertion of the quest for absolute certitude and power, metaphysical far more than political, rising out of the same anguish and struggle that animates *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. Miss Brée relegates Camus' exploration of the absurd to his pre-war epoch, but the essays in this volume were far more vital and relevant during and immediately following the occupation than she seems to recognize, and their continuing relevance for our time springs from a deep accord of Camus' attitudes and the immediate present. I am most in agreement with Miss Brée's judgment of *L'Été*, which contains some of Camus' very best writing, and which constitutes in its lyrical and intensely personal utterance a unique achievement in his art.

Miss Brée points out that between 1951 and 1956, Camus produced no major work. One may wonder if he has done so since. The essays which make up *Actuelles* and *L'Homme révolté* are major testimonies of the role of the artist as both witness and combatant, and their importance for Camus' personal development is undeniable—but from an artistic standpoint, the loss in imaginative expression is not offset by the gain in ideological clarity. Miss Brée does not tell us what she considers Camus' best work, but there are good grounds for holding his career since *L'Etranger* one of unfulfilled promise. On the other hand, anything which Albert Camus may write cannot fail to be of the keenest interest. Germaine Brée's book stems from a firm belief in his central importance in contemporary literature. Her readers will be grateful for her contribution to our knowledge and understanding of one of the most compelling and arresting writers of our time.

HASKELL M. BLOCK

University of Wisconsin

The Fugitives, A Critical Account by John M. Bradbury. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958. Pp. xi + 300. \$5.00.

Fugitives' Reunion, Conversations at Vanderbilt May 3-5, 1956. Ed. by Rob Roy Purdy. Introduction by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1959. Pp. 224. \$5.00.

Within the space of about a year we get two very different books looking back over the careers of the now conspicuous group of American poets, critics, and professors who during the early 1920's at Vanderbilt put out the little magazine called *The Fugitive*. John M. Bradbury is a Professor of Humanities at Union College, Schenectady; he gives us an early, a proto-professorial history of a literary movement—before the dust is laid or the troops (the “Confederate generals”) have stopped moving. Each Fugitive is divided into his phases, and his phases into his volumes of verse and prose, until nearly the very moment when Mr. Bradbury went to press. Meanwhile, the Fugitives themselves, or all the important ones, along with a few friends and editors, got together and held a kind of thirtieth or thirty-fifth class reunion at Vanderbilt, with an exhibition, two dinners, and two public meetings, speeches, poems, and wives, and in addition, what now becomes much more publicly accessible, four prolonged jam sessions tape-recorded behind closed doors.

A conviction that appears very strongly in both these books and is a main force in getting them produced is that the Fugitives do constitute a dynamically unified, cohesive, actual group—a kind of entity which has had a massive impact on the course of American letters and which is a prominently identifying feature of the work and career of each true Fugitive. Some of the Fugitives themselves seem a little skeptical or dismayed by this notion. The poets at the reunion spoke of their having been “shocked” in the late 1920's to discover that they were beginning to be looked on in that light. Requirements for a full or true membership are perhaps not quite clear. But roughly we may say that a Fugitive is nowadays one who was a member of a circle of instructors and students at Vanderbilt during the years 1922-1925, who held meetings and published the magazine. Or it may be enough to have been a Freshman there shortly after the heyday and to have been a close friend of some member of the original group. The present Fugitive is preferably a poet, novelist and critic, but he may also be a simple professor or even a business man who has an interest in philosophy and poetry. These conceptions make certain obvious difficulties for orderly narrative. Thus Mr. Bradbury finds that Cleanth Brooks, not “technically” a member, because of a late arrival at Vanderbilt, nevertheless reveals in one of his recent critical essays that “he is, and has been for long, a committed Fugitive.” The novelist and professor Andrew Lytle was another late comer, but his very definite if minor “Fugitiveness” appears in his recent writings. Two English professors, William Frierson and Walter Clyde Curry, although their biographical credentials are excellent, enjoy only a “technical” Fugitiveness. A related anomaly is that one group of Fugitives, the Nashville business men Alfred Starr, Alec B. Stevenson, and Jesse Wills and the political scientist William Yandell Elliott, who necessarily appear only on the margins of Mr. Bradbury's literary account, turn up in the very bosom of the Nashville conversations. Again, the Boston psychiatrist and sonneteer Merrill Moore, who also is in the heart

of the conversations, is in Mr. Bradbury's view "from the beginning a Fugitive-inspired phenomenon, rather than a true Fugitive." A rather too serious pre-occupation with too many labeled entities (a neglect of Occam's razor) is one of the most salient faults of Mr. Bradbury's book. He likes to use such ugly words as "Tatean," "Ransomism," "Ransomic" (repeatedly), and (once) "Ransomically." At one point, exhibiting a couplet of an early poem by R. P. Warren, he is sure just which words are derived from Ransom, from Tate, from Eliot.

The chief fault of Mr. Bradbury's performance results I think just from his over-systematic program of making the Fugitives into a school or movement, trying to embrace in one unified book all the various works of so difficult and formidable a list of writers as Ransom, Tate, Warren, and Brooks. We have such related sets of chapters as "Apprentice Tate," "Tate as Critic," "Tate's Fiction," "Tate as Poet." The method is almost necessarily a kind of end-to-end brick-laying or carpet-laying of book reports—synopses of plots and arguments, with critical judgments added, or, for some of the more inscrutable poems, simply observations on motifs and images. The diction is the most correct and technical philosophico-literary lingo of our age—now and then somewhat cutely used, or pompously. Mr. Bradbury has courage; he is willing to say outright which novels or poems look not so good as they ought to, which critical doctrines are stretched too far. The defects of this part of his undertaking seem pretty much unavoidable, given the nature of his ambition, his assumption that all these problematic and varied works in verse and prose *had* to be laid chronologically end to end in order to make one book, one faithful master pattern.

The chief excellence of Mr. Bradbury's history seems to me to appear in the strong main lines which he is able to draw around his subject; that is, he is a good historian of ideas, in his several summations and especially in his "Conclusion." The truth does seem to be that the Vanderbilt Fugitives of the 1920's gave one of the biggest pushes, perhaps as Mr. Bradbury thinks the biggest, to the mid-century American "religio-aesthetic reaction" against progressive "liberalism" and scientism. The most obvious immediate cause of their discontent, the local evil from which they fled, was the new post-war vulgarized South, industrialism and boosterism, Progress and Profits, the era of "the Golden Glow." But their opposition was so radically conceived that in succeeding years it worked out in ever-widening circles into a magnificently coherent record of protest against all the popular ideologies, against the very temper, of the times. The list of enemies, writes Mr. Bradbury, includes "all modern creeds of 'progress,' Marxism, Jeffersonian liberalism, finance capitalism and materialism, philosophic positivism, and public education." What then is the constructive Fugitive principle? What is *their* philosophy? Through all their variations, the Fugitive philosophy may be described as a return or an attempt to return to a concrete fullness of human experience, a recognition and reverence for the whole—the land, the history, the stabilizing tradition, the responsibility, the authority—The World's Body, the tensional completeness, the impure reality, the paradoxical confrontation. The recognition of the whole was a refusal of abstractionism; it entailed above all the difficult recognition, the acceptance, of evil, and was hence no less a refusal of meliorism. Mr. Bradbury sees the immediate prompting of all Fugitive thought in the stern Judaistic "dualism" of John Crowe Ransom, his now celebrated "irony," his pessimistic but not anguished preoccupation with man's *hard* situation. The Fugitive insistence on facing reality, on rooting the idea

and the ideal in the obdurate stuff of experience, meant that not only materialism but idealism was an enemy, and so they were in flight not only from the immediate post-war industrialized South but also from certain aspects of their own past—the nostalgic, the romantic, the feudal, the sectionally patriotic, the fundamentalist. (The Scopes trial was a rallying symbol—several times alluded to in the Reunion conversations.) Next in importance to Ransom's "dualism," a second, more theistic influence, which Mr. Bradbury at one point calls "medieval monism," was introduced to the Fugitives from T. S. Eliot as he was discovered during the twenties by Allen Tate. Mr. Bradbury remarks, I think correctly, a strong affinity between Ransom and his pupil Warren, a common secular emphasis of their humanism. A fact which he does not notice but which comes out briefly in the Vanderbilt conversations is the opposite affinity of Tate and Brooks, in the religious concern which completes the humanism of each.

Parallels can be drawn between the early activity of the Fugitives and that of such post-war American expatriates as Eliot, Stein, and Hemingway; or their ideas can be set in the context of distant pre-Existentialist rumblings in nineteenth-century Europe, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky, or of such nineteenth-century Americans as Thoreau, Melville, Henry James, and Henry Adams. "The Fugitives, however," observes Mr. Bradbury, "are incurably Southern, and have always been quick to repudiate a common heritage with their Northern predecessors, whose underlayer of Puritanism and abstractionism has . . . repelled them."

The major Fugitive battle, on the literary front, has been, as Mr. Bradbury observes, largely won. "If an avant-garde has continued to move beyond Fugitive positions, it does so in tacit acknowledgement of the achievements of the men who opened the new country to them." Perhaps Mr. Bradbury exaggerates the vision and the generosity of some of the avant-garde. He correctly observes the strong development of "Jungian and anthropologically oriented" ideas in today's "newer" new criticism." He might have mentioned too the newer and more theoretically fortified assertions of historical relativism which the success of "Fugitive" criticism, or simply of criticism, has provoked during the late forties and the fifties. (The original opponents of the critics in the American Academy were not relativists but historical determinists of various sorts, biographical devotees, and emotive appreciators—such changes has the dialectic whirligig brought round.)

But "Fugitiveness" as a movement can scarcely be traced beyond the beginning of World War II. After that there are simply individual once-Fugitive writers—a few of them very successful and influential. There was a period which Mr. Bradbury calls the "'golden era' of Fugitive criticism"—roughly 1936 to 1943—with Ransom's *The World's Body* (1938) and *The New Criticism* (1941), Tate's *Reactionary Essays* (1936) and *Reason in Madness* (1941), Brooks' *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939), Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* (1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943). This period was approximately coincident with the career of Brooks and Warren's *Southern Review* (1935-1943). (Just behind that was the Harvard oriented *Hound and Horn* (1927-1934), of which Tate was a southern regional editor, and *The American Review*, starting in 1933, and of course *The Sewanee Review*, with ups and downs in its relation to Fugitives.) Perhaps that "golden era" in criticism is the place at which many of Mr. Bradbury's academic readers will remember that they came in on the Fugitive story or first became clearly aware that something had been going on.

One of the merits of Mr. Bradbury's book is the simple narrative function (very efficiently carried out) of giving us the main names, titles, and dates, the events and groupings. (His "Selected Bibliography" seems well selected and comprehensive. But published information about the early Fugitive activities is scarce, and so I think he might have included, in addition to the important primary source article by Tate in the *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, April, 1942, a useful secondary survey by Robert Daniel, "The Critics of Nashville," in *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, University of Tennessee, 1956, and a primary source which I find referred to there, R. P. Warren's "Autobiographical Notes" in the *Wilson Bulletin*, 1939.)

The socio-economic rebels known during the 1930's as the Agrarians (campaigning mainly in two collections, *I'll Take My Stand*, 1930, and *Who Owns America?* 1936) were Fugitives (Ransom, Davidson, Tate, Warren, and Lytle) in a second main phase. A little earlier, during the late 1920's, the chronicle runs through an uncertain, suspended period, during which the Vanderbilt men were moving around, traveling abroad on Rhodes scholarships, attending graduate schools in this country, trying out teaching jobs or journalism in New York. And behind that lies the now fabled eponymous period, 1922-1925, and behind that, just after World War I, another Vanderbilt club, the Calumet, and the early career of J. C. Ransom, three years a Rhodes Scholar, who returned to teach English at Vanderbilt in 1914. And contemporary with him the strange, now mysteriously patriarchal figure of the retired business man and world-traveler Sidney Mtttron Hirsch—of whom more a little later.

The conversations at Vanderbilt in the spring of 1956 found some of the returning Fugitives a bit embarrassed at their position, apprehensive of what was expected of them. There was a certain air of the "mortuary" about it all. "We are what the scholars call a *corpus*," said Allen Tate. "A long time back at public executions," said R. P. Warren, "they let the culprit ride on his coffin while the band played a tune of his selection. . . . it's like putting frog legs in the skillet in the grease in order to find how the frog felt when he jumped. The legs will twitch all right, but what are you learning?" In a short summation on the third day: "We have been looking," said Cleanth Brooks, "at a last year's bird nest." It may be questioned whether the Fugitives did succeed in dredging up anything very definite or coherent about that long-past dawn period which they were reliving. Still the reliving does seem to have taken place—in some specially exciting way. "The Conference," says Mr. Rubin, "was successful in turning back the clock. For once the individual Fugitives were convened together behind closed doors, and the tape recorders began turning, something strange, even a little awesome, happened. They became a group again." A good many words were wasted, much repetition and fumbling did occur—a good deal of talking beside the point, of grabbing and pawing, of merely holding action, noises, to keep possession of the floor. At what *ex tempore* gab fest would this not be true? But if these tape recordings have not been doctored, by either participants or editor, as I have the impression they have not, the level of conversation was in my opinion very high. If we have heard some of these voices before at meetings, lectures, debates, or in smoke-filled rooms at conventions, the play of personalities comes off the printed page in a very lively, convincing way—the slow, ironically muted corrections and explanations of Ransom (surely the most genuinely courteous and charitable literary man of our time), the sudden,

bouncing ripostes of Tate, the gusty anecdotal snatches and staccato of Warren, the mildly irritated patience, the frustration, of Brooks at his ironical encomium of Hemingway being misunderstood. There are short snatches of conversation, especially of anecdote (about Ransom's first appearance before his Oxford tutor in philosophy, for instance, or, from Warren, about Ransom's receiving "with composure" his two author's copies of *Poems about God* while in France during World War I) which will deserve their echoes in future writing about the Fugitive school.

Perhaps the thing that will be most surprising to an outsider is a certain sort of relation which obtains between the literary Fugitives and their non-literary or less literary fellows. Almost the whole first session, for instance, and some moments of later sessions were taken up with the useless question why none of the Fugitives has ever produced an epic poem. Why did the conversations thus get out of hand? Why did "a group of poets who had achieved so much" spend so much time discussing what they had never tried to achieve? Because the Fugitive literary men, on this occasion at least, were exceedingly humble and pliable. They were bullied into this topic and carried along, unable to escape from it, by two aggressive non-literary members, Alfred Starr, Bijou theatre-chain president and arts patron, and William Yandell Elliott, Harvard political economist—and especially, or about ninety per cent, by the latter. Elliott was apparently a fringe member of the early literary group, a Rhodes scholar and Oxford Ph.D. (1923), who kept ducking in and out of Nashville during the great years. He is now mighty conscious of his own lifelong concern with poetry and his intimacy with poets (take Yeats in those "all-night sessions" at Oxford, for instance, or those "thirty-page letters" from "A. E."); he is proud of his efforts while abroad in "sending" some of those "people" over for the American "boys" to consider. He is proud of his broad outlook on things and the pragmatic importance of his thinking. "I work on the planning board of the National Security Council." He is obsessed with the idea that poetry ought to have a definite socio-political function (This ties in, or seems to, with the whole Agrarian business on the last day)—and hence he has the idea that the epic, formulating the ideals of a nation and a culture, is the most important kind of poem—and his Fugitive friends have been somewhat delinquent in not setting themselves to that task. (Throughout the conversations a certain "undercurrent of feeling" is generated, that the Fugitives *should* have written some epics.) Elliott, in other words, appears as the Arnoldian in this debate with the poets, but, by a paradox of the history of ideas, he is also the neo-Philistine of the Fugitive group.

About equal to Elliott as an anomaly in these talks—or perhaps surpassing him as a curiosity (though not so durable or so voluble)—is the venerable and bearded Sidney Hirsch. (See the admirable frontispiece group photograph.) He was in the old days a Nashville resident, more or less invalided in the home of another Fugitive patron (James Frank). He was a former New York business man, author of certain dramatic pageants or the like, a world traveller, amateur etymologist, esoteric symbolist, Rosicrucian perhaps, cabbalist, and neo-Platonist. "He believed in the wisdom of the ancients." He had been a great befriender and promoter of the movement. "Mr. Hirsch," Tate recalls in his article of 1942, "pontificated at the sessions, reclining in a sort of oriental luxury among pillows." He had written a poem called "The Fugitive Blacksmith," and it was

he who insisted that the young men name their magazine *The Fugitive*. It was near the end of the second session of the 1956 conversations, devoted to miscellaneous reminiscences, that Hirsch's name, in his absence, first came up prominently. Alfred Starr testified that during thirty years of living in town he had not once talked to Hirsch or even seen him. William Yandell Elliott recalled that in the early discussions Hirsch was a "dominant character." "You had almost to break away from Sidney, eventually . . . and we all did . . . in order just to get clear of this hypnotic, mesmeric kind of influence. But there's no question at all about the power of his mind; and it's very sad that he has absented himself from this performance." "You must feel his power to understand his part in our beginnings." Who now was sent in search of Sidney and secured his presence at the Friday afternoon session? Strenuous efforts were no doubt made. He appeared (in time for the photograph during the noon recess), he spoke at the session, he pontificated (by urgent solicitation of poets present)—he mystified—he was just as the Fugitives in the morning session had described him.

HIRSCH: It's a very amazing thing that he [Tate] uses certain Platonic terms and certain Greek words—gives the derivations and has paromania on them—which he informed me at the time that he did not know, was not aware of. Am I correct about that?

TATE: Yes.

HIRSCH: You are now?

TATE: Yes, much more so.

. . .

HIRSCH: . . . And, again, Plato uses those two terms and he calls them, as you recall, *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*. Now I'd like to ask if you were aware at the time that you were doing it, or did you come in the category of Plato who said that the poet arrives at these conclusions by great flashes of genius? Is it a fair question to ask?

RANSOM: Yes, it is. Yes, I remember you said that, and that I had a feeling that my poem was more serious than it sounded. . . .

Hirsch, like Elliott, was something of a solemn show-off. "I've given it some considerable thought. I've thought especially about. . . ." Why, Hirsch attended a New York performance of T. S. Eliot's *Cocktail Party*, in company with "a very noted psychiatrist" and "a highly cultured European lady" ("made pilgrimages to Goethe's place, and so forth"), and they found the play "terribly tedious," they were "frankly bored." Except for a single startling passage in the third act! [That Shelley passage, no doubt, or what follows, about "a sudden intuition, in certain minds."] "The man had utilized the entire play as a vehicle in order to put across the two or three lines." At the end of this afternoon session Hirsch disappears from the record as abruptly as he has appeared.¹

The fourth session, next morning, is devoted peaceably to some reminiscences of Agrarianism and attempts to reconcile its socio-political aims with the true individual Fugitive desire simply of being an honest and skilful poet which Tate (with his warning cry "This discussion has become much too highfalutin") has reiterated from the beginning, with more or less steady support from Warren,

¹ Donald Davidson, "The Thankless Muse and Her Fugitive Poets," *Sewanee Review* (Spring, 1958), supplies some colorful paragraphs about Hirsch c. 1914-1916.

Ransom, and Davidson. One thing that comes out of these conversations is the extraordinary and pervasive courtesy and charity, and mutual tolerance, the love and admiration, of these Nashville men for one another—and especially the deference and forbearance of the literary men toward the less literary, of the stronger toward the weaker, and of the younger, the now middle-aged, toward the elders. One other thing, asserted by Tate in his reminiscence of 1942, discovered and emphasized by Mr. Bradbury, and now corroborated and dramatically if quietly revealed by the conversations, is the early and profound intellectual leadership of John Crowe Ransom. There is not even any momentary danger of our confusing his steady and telling responses, the softly resistant, dryly oracular utterance, with the red herrings and exhibitionism of figures like Elliott or Hirsch.

The meetings ended, almost as if the gesture had been rehearsed, with a last joke by Warren—"lowering" the tone "not quite to the smoking car level"—about a girl delinquent, the last of 5,000 interviewed in some kind of survey, who, when asked why she did it, replied, "I likes it." "[laughter] Well, I think that's what the Rockefeller Foundation's going to find out—[laughter] We haven't got any alibis."

One of the "other" persons present at the closed Vanderbilt sessions was Mrs. Louise Cowan, Ph.D., Vanderbilt, 1953, author of still a further book on our theme, entitled *The Fugitive Group: A Literary History*, to be published by the Louisiana State University Press during 1959. It is a merit as well as a limitation of Mr. Bradbury's book that he has kept strictly clear of the paths of gossip and special sources, confining himself to information already in print. Mrs. Cowan's book will be "based on a wealth of unpublished source material."

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The Critical Writings of James Joyce, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann. New York: The Viking Press, 1959. Pp. 288. \$5.00.

A James Joyce Miscellany: Second Series, ed. Marvin Magalaner. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959. Pp. xvi + 233. \$5.00.

The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism by J. Mitchell Morse. New York: New York University Press, 1959. Pp. xi + 169. \$4.00.

For the second time within a year, the present reviewer has undertaken a quarterly round-up of new books pertaining to Joyce; and on both occasions he has had three volumes to report on; from which he infers that the current rate of production in the field is a book a month. That means, of course, that the subject is being pursued to an intensive degree of specialization. Thus Joyce's relationship to religion is one of the central questions raised by his works—perhaps too large and controversial a question to be subsumed as yet in any single or comprehensive treatment. Already we have Kristian Smidt's suggestive monograph, *James Joyce and the Cultic Use of Fiction* (Oslo, 1955), Father William Noon's thorough study of *Joyce and Aquinas* (New Haven, 1957), and

Kevin Sullivan's somewhat doctrinaire *Joyce among the Jesuits* (New York, 1958). If this monographic approach to Joyce proceeds farther, there are several other important aspects of his religion still to be explored: notably the influence of the liturgy on his writing, or again his special concern with Giordano Bruno, Nicholas of Cusa, and similarly heretical thinkers. The latest contribution, J. Mitchell Morse's *Sympathetic Alien*, is written from a point of view which the title—Joyce's own phrase—may suggest. But it is not the broad synthesis suggested by the subtitle, *James Joyce and Catholicism*. Rather, it is more specialized than its forerunners. It is a gathering of eight articles, most of them previously published in scholarly journals, relating Joyce's fiction to the thought of Augustine, Erigena, Loyola, and other Catholic theologians.

Theology is never irrelevant to the consideration of Joyce's ideas; but his attitude toward it was tangential, to say the least; and consequently the base it provides for commentary is bound to be rather oblique. Obviously, Professor Morse has spent many more hours than Joyce ever did over Migne's *Patrologia*, and many of the parallels he has adduced seem too general in their application to be particularly illuminating. Joyce, the collector and orchestrator of phrases, made a poignant theme out of *Agenbite of Inwit*; but that he conceived his characters in the light of the ethics propounded by Dan Michel's treatise, I have not been convinced. Mr. Morse is more at home in medieval than in modern literature: he credits Stephen Dedalus with the authorship of the line, actually quoted from Yeats, about "the white breast of the dim sea." Yet he is a perceptive reader of Joyce, and his *obiter dicta* have a value that carries well beyond the matter at hand. He is at his best in showing how Joyce's puristic doctrines of esthetics, both critical and creative, are respectively grounded upon Thomistic and Augustinian precedents. With engaging candor he states his own reservations, thereby criticizing the limitations of Joyce's art-for-art's-sake. Inevitably, the tension between the artist's sympathy with the church and his alienation from it must be summed up by the term "ambivalence." But Mr. Morse distinguishes nuances, even as he documents his terms: Joyce's "conscience is not that of a conformist nor altogether that of a rebel, but the permanently uneasy conscience of an artist."

The interpretation of Joyce in the nineteen-fifties is described by Marvin Magalaner, in his introduction to the second *James Joyce Miscellany*, as "work of consolidation." Professor Magalaner takes modest pride in the fact that American universities have been the principal sponsors of what today—without irony or self-consciousness—we call Joycean studies. His attractive and interesting compilation draws upon the recent activities of "fifteen major Joyceans," in the phrase of the jacket. Since there are eighteen contributors in all, that phrase seems slightly invidious; but both the Academy and the cult of Joyce have their hierarchies, which it is not for a minor Joycean to question. The earlier manifestoes and polemics, the subsequent revaluations and commentaries, have been succeeded by the high seriousness of professional scholarship. Not all of these consolidators, however, are quite as solid as scholars ought to be. One of them, for example, proclaims his discovery of a work which may indeed have relevance: "I do not know that Joyce read George Moore's excellent novel, *The Lake* . . ." Why should the scholar not know? Joyce's own testimony to that effect is embodied in Gorman's biography. Yet, given the new material coming out currently, it is not surprising that some of the old gets overlooked. This mis-

cellany presents unpublished letters, several unfamiliar photographs, memoirs, an iconography, a reproduction of the famous schema for *Ulysses*, and five additional pages of *Stephen Hero*. We may receive the latter gift with mixed feelings, since it outdates the recent second edition without completing it.

But we can only applaud the commemoration of Joyce's most devoted friend, Paul Léon. And we must be grateful for a large number of chapters which fill in our knowledge or stimulate further discussion. "Who was M'Intosh?" Mr. Bloom's last riddle, is ingeniously pondered by John O. Lyons. Henry Morton Robinson advances, along with a list of the ever-changing cognomens of H. C. E., a bold suggestion as to his ultimate identity. Mitchell Morse, temporarily deserting patristics, expresses a lively dissenting opinion about Molly Bloom. Herbert Howarth entertainingly rambles, from Jonsonian to Joycean comedy, in a direction pointed by the shadow of Oscar Wilde. A more influential shade, Charles Stewart Parnell, is discussed by Adaline Glasheen, in an essay which is richly informative until it moves from history into mythography. Walton Litz paves the way for future researches into *Finnegans Wake* by outlining and illustrating the chronology of its composition. The most substantial article in the volume, and for me the most fascinating, is Joseph Prescott's "Stylistic Realism in *Ulysses*." Here, with the fullest and most concrete documentation, we are permitted to follow the very process of writing as Joyce proceeded from draft to draft. We are encouraged to hope that Mr. Prescott, who has been meticulously scanning Joyce's notebooks, manuscripts, and proofs, will soon be giving us the definitive study of *Ulysses* in the making. We also look forward to a third *Miscellany*, hoping that it will have as much to recommend it as this one.

The publication of the last quarter—or of the past few years—that does the most to solidify our understanding of Joyce is the collection of his *Critical Writings*, admirably edited by Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann. They have gathered together fifty-seven miscellaneous pieces, dating from Joyce's fourteenth to his fifty-seventh year. Several of these are from unpublished manuscripts in the Cornell and Yale University Libraries: a sampling of his schoolboy compositions, the paper on "Drama and Life" that he read to his college debating society on an occasion remembered in *Stephen Hero*, lectures on Irish culture translated from the Italian in which they were delivered at Trieste. The other items are reprinted, mostly from all-but-inaccessible files, with helpful notes and succinct introductions. These include the three essays published during Joyce's university days, twenty-three newspaper book-reviews, translations of his articles from *Il Piccolo della Sera*, program notes on the repertory of his short-lived theatrical company, his poetic *ripostes* and *jeux d'esprit*, the operatic prose poem on John Sullivan in the manner of the *Wake*, and testimonial letters to periodicals, plus that original letter on the foot-and-mouth disease which would inspire Stephen Dedalus to dub himself "the bullockbefriending bard." If all this be reckoned as criticism, it is far from purely esthetic or formalistic; it is criticism of life with a vengeance. Much of it is hack-work, dashed off to sustain life in years of struggle. Some of it formulates artistic principles later put into practice. Some of it mocks, both gaily and bitterly, the artist himself and his contemporaries.

More than once in his correspondence Joyce described himself as "a bad critic," and his grudging references there to such writers as Proust seem to bear him out. Yet one of his notebooks, now at the University of Buffalo, contains some appreciative jottings on Proust. Joyce's literary faculties were so highly

developed that he could not help illuminating whatever he chose to focus them upon; but—except for occasional sidelights—he concentrated, more and more single-mindedly, on the problems encountered or engendered by his own artistry. He was more of a critic before he became a creator; we can watch him, in his undergraduate essays, preparing the ground. Nevertheless, his fiction abounds in critical discussions, such as the Aristotelian passage in the *Portrait*. Just as he redefined classical conceptions for his own purposes, so he recast in his personal image romantics like Mangan and Blake. His reviews were frankly springboards for Stephen's leaps. His modernism, as of the opening decade of the twentieth century, occasioned not only his celebration of Ibsen but his gibes at Matthew Arnold and the Victorians. Although he was to write nostalgically about Wilde, Shaw, and Synge from the continent, he voiced his doubts about the Irish Literary Movement in reviewing a book by Lady Gregory herself, who had got him his post as a reviewer. But who can say, in retrospect, that those doubts were unjustified; that the "mean influences" so ringingly challenged in "The Day of the Rabblement" have not multiplied to waylay writers; or that the young man's intention to be an artist, which must have sounded brash when he declared it, was not overwhelmingly fulfilled?

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