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Book Reviews

Symbolism: The Manichean Vision by Daniel J. Schneider. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1975. Pp. xii + 235. \$10.95.

Critics have long noted the extensive use of imagery to establish thematic concerns and form by late-nineteenth and twentieth-century English and American writers. Daniel J. Schneider presents a valuable contribution to this area of critical analysis in his thorough and competent study, *Symbolism: The Manichean Vision*. He explores the art of Joseph Conrad, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and Wallace Stevens, focusing his analysis on the way imagery creates a symbolic core for characterization, theme, and structure. By identifying the central antithesis in a literary work, Schneider discovers the symbolic families which reveal the writer's vision. He therefore argues that a study of symbolism provides the most perceptive and accurate analysis of the artist's imagination.

Schneider sees "the contrast between mind and nature, or mind-art and life-nature" (ix) as a common generative source for literary symbols. Although symbolism grew out of idealism and a revolt against materialism, Schneider argues that it is grounded in doubt and disbelief and provides a tragicomic mode of vision and expression. Manichean symbolists view life as paradoxical; this necessitates their use of antinomies which can be traced back to the Platonic distinction between incorruptible essence and corrupt matter. By embracing both the ideal and the material, the Manichean is a realist; he searches for symbols which depict the dualities of man's nature and experience while simultaneously seeking unity of being through a reconciliation of opposites. Schneider therefore believes that the Manichean vision surpasses both a partial view of man's being and a dogmatic view of experience because it is an enlarged vision, linked to truth.

For Schneider, the Manichean vision is the essence of the fiction of Conrad, James, and Woolf, and the poetry of Stevens. As he analyzes their works, he follows his established methodology, identifying the network of symbolic families which express the writer's central antithesis. This approach allows him to demonstrate perceptively the way imagery clarifies characterization and theme in Conrad and James whose works are grounded in moral and philosophical concerns and thus lend themselves to symbolic analysis. Conrad dramatizes the opposition between dream and reality, or idealism and materialism, which provides the generative source for the key image patterns within Conrad's dense prose and explains the relationship between form and style. Schneider also reveals how irony stems from the paradox of the ideal being rooted in the material and becomes part of Conrad's exploration of appearance versus reality. Like Conrad, James develops the use of symbols as a systematic technique. Schneider finds the central antithesis of James's work in the tension between

freedom and restriction, complemented by the conflict between the inner life and the world of appearances and things. In both Conrad and James, imagery creates an emotional atmosphere and implies moral values, while irony indicates the moral vision of each writer by holding the dualities of man's nature in balance.

The poetry of Wallace Stevens expresses the Manichean vision through its emphasis on the interdependence of imagination and reality, or the admixture of feeling and skepticism. Stevens develops a symbolic scheme for images or terms which double for reality and imagination, thereby intensifying their meaning and providing an understanding of his poems. Schneider demonstrates that the development of symbolism in Stevens's poetry confirms the central importance of the Manichean vision throughout Stevens's growth as an artist. With Stevens, as with Conrad and James, Schneider's methodology adequately examines the artist's thought through use of language and form.

In his discussion of Virginia Woolf, however, one senses the limitations of Schneider's approach. Schneider sees fact and vision, art-time, and order-chaos as the central antitheses of Woolf's work and links them to the art-life and idealism-materialism concepts of the Manichean vision. In *The Years* and *Between the Acts*, for example, Woolf juxtaposes the ideal of an integrated personality with man's dual self and experience. Fragmentation, division, and contradiction dominate these novels and thwart the characters' efforts toward harmony and fulfillment. While Schneider's analysis identifies some of the basic elements of Woolf's fiction, it overlooks Woolf's attempt to combine social, historical, and class factors with individual psychology and philosophical experience. It also fails to consider the lyrical evocation of life and the visual and sensual nature of Woolf's poetic prose. These features cannot be encompassed by Schneider's methodology. Schematic analysis of symbolic patterns is most insightful when identifying philosophical and moral vision; its scope, however, does not extend well to explorations of individual psychology or to key features of artistic expression, aside from the use of imagery.

Professor Schneider anticipates possible objections to the value of his approach when he warns that symbolic patterning can "drive out the sense of life itself" (206) and cause literature to become artificial and mechanical rather than imaginative and expressive. Schneider claims that the vitality in some aspects of Stevens's poetry and Conrad's fiction is sacrificed to the logical development of symbolism. These comments help to evaluate Schneider's study; although it is a thorough explication of imagery in relation to structural and thematic elements, it presents no new imaginative insights into the works discussed. Because Schneider considers literature in terms of the relationship between philosophical vision and artistic form and style, but does not include the impact of history on the writer and his genre, he is unable to explore in any depth why the Manichean vision becomes particularly characteristic of late-nineteenth and twentieth-century intellectual thought, or to demonstrate its unique contributions to the development of the novel and poetry. These concerns would have extended the significance of Professor Schneider's analysis of the writer's craft and vision.

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Notes for Joyce: An Annotation of James Joyce's Ulysses by Don Gifford, with Robert J. Seidman. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1974. Pp. xiv + 554. \$14.95.

This volume is a better one than its predecessor by the same authors—the *Notes for Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* first published in 1967—if only because, as befits a book of annotations for the novel which has become one of the cornerstones of judgment for the modernist movement, it is far more ambitious. Dublin's store has yielded once again a large inventory (not counting prefatory matter and maps fore and aft, 554 pp. to Joyce's 783 or 768, depending on your edition), and its cataloguers have made their lists with Puritan industry.

The audience for the book, presumably, is anyone who cares to read *Ulysses* with a better understanding of Joyce's use of detail—not merely, as in Weldon Thornton's *Allusions in Ulysses* (Chapel Hill, 1968), the detail of literary allusion, but detail of all sorts, though one sort is perhaps most important: the “vernacular and verbal worlds of Dublin 1904” which the annotators feel must be gotten down now because they are “rapidly passing out of living memory.” If the notes sometimes “appear to labor an abundance of the obvious in order to render a few grains of the subtle and suggestive,” the annotators, attempting to achieve neutrality—to “inform rather than direct a reading of the novel”—had to accept a certain “overweighting as a problem inherent from the outset in the concept of a ‘neutral’ annotation.”

If this is an error, it is undoubtedly one in the right direction. Some of the annotations may seem inordinately long considering the information they contain, but thus we are held to Joyce's neutral course. The list includes not only slang expressions, but also names of people and places, passages of parody (labelled “Parody”), and literary allusions, which often duplicate those of Weldon Thornton. There are brief summaries of each episode and maps too, though these last, along with the places and streets they graph, are better served in a more recent volume somewhat heavier in interpretation—*A Topographical Guide to James Joyce's Ulysses* by Clive Hart and Leo Knuth (Colchester: A Wake Newsletter Press, 1975). *Notes*—with the notes numbered according to the edition (two sets of figures, one for the earlier edition and one for the more recent) and in sequence, “not unlike the footnotes at the bottom of the pages of an edition of Shakespeare or Milton—is “to be laid open beside the novel and . . . read in tandem with it.” Just about everything seems right: the apparatus is well designed; the volume, though large, is not bulky; the annotations, though frequently lengthy, are not too directive; and yet, in spite of all this rightness, in the end the whole thing seems hopelessly wrong. Somehow, inevitably, in this tidy process *Ulysses* gets lost.

And so does the reader who has approached literature as something vibrant in which he might find both aesthetic satisfaction and some meaning for his life. If we—and I now think of those of us who might use this volume as a supplementary text in teaching *Ulysses*—if we hand the first reader of *Ulysses* a book

like this and tell him to put it at his elbow while he reads we are bound to make that experience for him pedantic and constricted. Guides, indices, annotated lists, etc. (for once this phrase is not redundant) form one more part of that army of all too frequently altered law which directs taste even when it is not supposed to. It is not that such volumes are never necessary. Surely, *Ulysses*, like four-fifths of the best work of its period, at times most certainly requires a guide. However, must the guide-makers therefore presume that they are indispensable? The makers of this one think so. According to them, the humblest use of their guide should precede the reading of the text: "Perhaps the best approach [to using the *Notes*] would be a compromise: to skim a sequence of notes, then to read the annotated sequence in the novel with interruptions for consideration of those notes which seem crucial and then to follow with an uninterrupted reading of the sequence in the novel." Essence precedes existence.

Such inflated notions of the usefulness of this guide suggest that, for its authors, the experience of reading a work of literature may be reduced to so many notes per page and so many pages of notes per chapter, until finally, as if the reader were computing the balance in his checking account, he thinks a book has come out right because he reaches the bottom line and misses none of the steps. Bowdler squelched taste by omissions which strike the modern reader as silly; the modern annotator and critic squelches it by his inclusiveness, and the more he puts in the more the reader feels left out.

How much elucidation does the following passage need?

Glowing wine on his palate lingered swallowed. Crushing in the wine-press grapes of Burgundy. Sun's heat it is. Seems to a secret touch telling me memory. Touched his sense moistened remembered. Hidden under wild ferns on Howth. Below us bay sleeping sky. No sound. The sky. The bay purple by the Lion's head. Green by Drumleck. Yellowgreen towards Sutton. Fields of undersea, the lines faint brown in grass, buried cities. Pillowed on my coat she had her hair, earwigs in the heather scrub my hand under her nape, you'll toss me all. O wonder! Coolsoft with ointments her hand touched me, caressed: her eyes upon me did not turn away.

And how much need we nudge the reader to see that Joyce is not an anti-Semite? That he sympathizes with many aspects of bourgeois life? That he thinks aristocracy as foolish as the heroic ideal, and flag-waving patriotism as foolish as either? That Stephen has yet to make himself the artist his perceptions show us he will become? That Molly is neither strumpet nor earth-mother but both of these, and more? If we construct—and the "we" is especially appropriate in addressing an academic audience because in this culture the academic establishment is largely responsible for the shaping of literary taste—a monument no one can scale, we have done to *Ulysses* an act of nearly incomparable destructiveness, as complete in its way as burning the book because it mentions in simple Anglo-Saxon terms certain basic human functions. To put Joyce in scale, we do not need to make him vastly larger than life nor do we need to make him in miniature. We must simply remember

that the purpose of our instruction is to let the reader reach his own revelation.

All of this is not to say that all of Joyce is "easy." *Ulysses* in part, *Finnegans Wake* virtually in whole—these are works which are anything but easy. Nor is all of this to take an anti-intellectual position, though some will undoubtedly hear it that way. I merely wish to suggest that if Joyce lives it will not be because of books like this one, but because there is something in Joyce which such books do not touch—something which speaks directly to human experience, making of everyday life something beautiful and, sometimes, also good.

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Movements in English Literature 1900-1940 by Christopher Gillie. London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975. Pp. viii + 207. \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper.

At a time of a superabundance of specialized scholarship, there is at once promise and peril in undertaking a more general study. Without doubt literary criticism is currently in danger of intellectual Balkanization, of a willed myopia in which we cannot see the forest for minutely inspecting the bark of a single tree. In this situation, a book which illuminates the literature of an entire period is a welcome event. However, there is always the danger that a wider study will say so little about so much, that we would have been better off with a number of in-depth analyses of specific works or authors. The latter is unfortunately the case with Christopher Gillie's *Movements in English Literature 1900-1940*. Despite an initial attempt to provide broad principles of organization for his subject-matter, Professor Gillie has not even written an interesting "thesis" book. Rather, he takes what could be described as a "modified encyclopedic" approach to modern British literature, selecting his material so as to try to cover the major figures and the important trends of the years 1900-1940. The result is essentially a loosely connected series of analyses of particular authors and of individual works. Taken all together, these do not develop a coherent, original perspective, defining the modern period in a new and penetrating manner. Regarded individually, they tend to be somewhat elementary if often intelligent, the sort of thing we might expect in a well-taught undergraduate survey.

As a jumping-off point for his introductory chapter, Gillie uses an argument between Henry James and H. G. Wells about the nature and purpose of the novel. Wells conceives of the form as a means to an educational end beyond itself, whereas James sees the "craft of fiction" as a supreme principle, giving order and meaning to human life. The disagreement between James and Wells is related in a rather sketchy fashion to Arnold's distinction between Hebraism and Hellenism, to the "Aesthetic" movement of the Nineties, and to the didactic drama of Shaw. On this basis, Gillie sets up a tentative antithesis

between "art" and literary "journalism." The former he relates to Renaissance humanism, with its Classical and aristocratic biases, and its chief literary expressions in poetry and poetic drama. The latter he sees as growing from Biblically-inspired Protestantism of the commercial middle classes, and as finding its characteristic outlet in the English novel from Defoe to Dickens. In the "journalistic" novel, the writer began with "a something to say" ..and then allowed the theme to generate its own growth." (p. 10) The result was "an imaginative image of current social fact." (p. 9) Gillie then relates D. H. Lawrence to this tradition because of his religious seriousness, and his "form within what appears to be formlessness." (p. 12) By this time, however, Gillie is dissatisfied with the term "journalist," and offers instead that of "interpreter." An interpreter is one who "transmits meanings through imaginative symbols." (p. 14)

To round out his introductory chapter, Gillie attempts to relate the general categories which he has set up to the problems of poetic communication in the early Twentieth Century. The Victorian poets, despite their talent and their efforts to the contrary, "remained peripheral to the mind of the age." (p. 15) Intimidated by the scientists and their philosophical disciples, they felt themselves limited to a "province of emotion." (p. 15) Consequently, poetry became an elegant but trivial diversion, unrelated to the serious business of life. However, between 1910 and 1920, the form was rescued from this impasse by two factors: the wars in Ireland and Europe, and "a change in thinking about the medium of poetry." (p. 16) The war poets, Owen, Sassoon, *et al.*, broke down the barrier of communication by using "familiar forms with deep sincerity" (p. 17) so as to express their feelings of pity and revulsion. However, Eliot, Pound, and Yeats achieved a much more thorough reformation of the medium. In particular, Eliot succeeded in reuniting thought and emotion through a process of imaginative association. By concentrating on poetry as an "art," Eliot, Pound, and Yeats at the same time rejuvenated it as an "interpretive" form.

I have summarized Gillie's first chapter because it illustrates his failure to come to grips with his material in a particularly fresh or incisive manner. He appears to be attempting to establish a framework for his study, but his categories are so vague and superficial that he does little more than talk around his subject in a somewhat rambling fashion. Moreover, his argument is not always entirely sound. No fair and informed reader of Victorian poetry would suggest that Tennyson and Browning shrank from the great ideas and issues of their age because they were scared by the scientists and their disciples. Gillie's assessment of Wilfred Owen as a minor poet, who communicated sincere feelings in traditional forms, ignores his successful experimentation with half-rhymes. It also does an injustice (as Gillie's own later analysis of Owen implies) to the poetic power of his brutally frank if piteous presentation of the horrors of war. Even what is perfectly correct and just in Gillie's first chapter offers us little if anything that is not common knowledge. Any reader of Ian Watt and Percy Lubbock will learn little from his remarks about the novel. Gillie's introduction is not a disappointment so much because he is on occasion wrong, but because his rightness is so bland.

In the remainder of his book, Professor Gillie does not systematically apply or develop the thesis of his first chapter. Rather, his study consists pretty much of a series of analyses of individual authors and works, variously grouped according to genre, period, and writer. Gillie does make some attempt to organize such divisions, to generalize about them, and to classify authors within them, but the results of this process are generally neither new or striking. Because Gillie's specific studies exist as more or less independent entities, it is legitimate to judge them by what they accomplish in and of themselves. In this connection, the critic is handicapped by the problem that, in attempting to cover a generous selection of modern authors in less than two hundred pages, he lacks space to do justice to many of his subjects. Henry James, for instance, is treated in eight pages in which only two novels, *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Ambassadors*, are discussed. Similarly, Conrad is skipped over in nine pages, only *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Nostramo* being treated in any detail. Many of Gillie's observations are intelligent enough, as for example his classification of Conrad's characters into the base and destructive man of self-interest, the simple-minded and simple-hearted individual of unshakable integrity, and the man or imagination who achieves self-knowledge. However, of what real use is a study of Conrad which does not treat in some serious fashion *Lord Jim*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Victory*? Moreover, although Gillie mentions Conrad's use of a *persona* as narrator, he says nothing about his experiments with plot-sequence. Ford Madox Ford, Conrad's collaborator in such innovations, is not even mentioned. In discussing Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forester, and Graham Greene, Gillie treats in any detail only one novel by each author. Even for a writer of lesser stature and compass, this is surely an inadequate coverage.

If Gillie's hit and run treatment does insufficient justice to the scope of a novelist like James or Conrad, it is clearly inadequate to cope with the depth and complexity of the major modern poets. The earlier Yeats, for example, is discussed mainly in terms of metre and diction, and of his Anglo-Irish cultural background. The poet's theory of history is touched upon very briefly and the "lunar wheel" is mentioned only in passing. In his discussion of the difficult later poems, Gillie makes some valid points, but his lack of attention to Yeats' philosophy and symbolism vitiates his treatment of individual pieces. His analysis of "Among School Children" begins by being simplistic, and ends in the sort of confusion which one receives from a student who is obviously bewildered, but feels that he must sound intelligent at all costs. Here is Gillie's explication of the first three stanzas of "Sailing to Byzantium":

"Sailing to Byzantium" announces his [i. e. Yeats'] retreat from Ireland ("That is no country for old men"), and, in the second stanza, his fidelity to his art, for whose sake he seeks in Byzantium "*monuments [sic] of its own magnificence*". The third stanza evokes the contrast between the man and the artist, calling upon the sages of Byzantium to "Consume my heart away..." (p. 154)

Yeats is of course announcing his retreat not from Ireland, but from the world of generation. For the rest, there is nothing here that an intelligent

sophomore could not discover by himself, or by spending an hour in a decent library. T. S. Eliot, with whom Gillie evidently has more sympathy, fares rather better, especially in the discussion of his critical theory. Even at that, "The Waste Land" receives a scant attention out of keeping with its richness and its central importance for modern poetry. Jessie Weston is not even mentioned.

A point which should have been clarified by Professor Gillie at the outset is the level of the audience to which his book is pitched. Obviously, it does not offer a great deal to the advanced student of modern British literature. However, the elementary nature of many of Gillie's analyses indicates that he perhaps had the undergraduate or the non-academic reader in mind. Otherwise, he would surely have felt no need to explain that "The word 'renaissance' means rebirth," (p. 7) or that the Georgian poets were so called "because George V succeeded Edward VII in 1910." (p. 15) If Gillie's book is indeed intended for the non-specialist, its often intelligent observations give it a certain usefulness. For example, his chapter on D. H. Lawrence, to whom he devotes reasonable space, forms a helpful introduction to the novelist. Gillie is also to be commended for his generally unpretentious presentation of his material. Even at that, however, his study is probably not worth the over thirteen dollars which it will cost (in hardback) after sales tax has been added. At the present inflated cost of books, one expects a little more bang for his bucks.

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Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes by Eric Trudgill. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1976. Pp. xii + 336. \$15.00.

Eric Trudgill has provided the comprehensive study of Victorian sexual attitudes that has often been promised to us by others writers, but never actually delivered. Time and again we have been seduced into reading studies that claim to be histories of Victorian sexual mores, but until *Madonnas and Magdalens*, the only truly valuable studies in this line have been more limited in their purposes. Steven Marcus' *The Other Victorians* is an example, taking up, for the most part, the forbidden aspects of sexuality in Victorian England.

Professor Trudgill's study is balanced. He succeeds in describing and documenting not only the seamier aspects of Victorian society, but its ordinary and authorized features as well. What is more important, he approaches his subject with a rare justice, taking pains to defend the Victorians against glib charges of hypocrisy. He never smirks. Instead, he shows the several ways in which Victorian respectability was the natural consequence not of sexual hypocrisy, but of such far-reaching forces as class consciousness, religious doubt, and political exigency. He explains how the home became idealized for Victorians because it genuinely served as a model for probable order in a

society that, for a long while, seemed to lack stability. More significantly, he demonstrates how insidious indoctrination concerning the dangers of sex could be. "Doctors," he says, "unfortunately, far from checking the contagion of fear, all too often spread it." As a result, decent women felt shamed by their own sexual impulses, and adolescents believed that masturbation would drive them mad.

Other writers have taken up some of these individual points, just as they have frequently taken up the subject of nineteenth-century attitudes toward women. Professor Trudgill re-examines the subject of women with a breadth of reference and a clarity of perception that offer not a great deal that is new, but a more extensive and humane interpretation of a complicated issue. First delineating their identifying attributes, he emphasizes the "interdependence of the angel and the outcast," the good woman and the harlot. Moreover, he corrects our all-too-easily accepted picture of the Victorians, heavily promoted in the last few years, as secretly prodigious and exuberant fornicators, reminding us that, given the circumstances, "It is remarkable how vigorously many Victorians struggled against indulgence in immorality."

Having begun by presenting a general survey of Victorian sexual attitudes, Professor Trudgill devotes the second part of his book to a historical review of sexual manners, first as they were manifest in society, and then as they appeared in literature. These historical chapters are interesting and useful, but they also involve a substantial degree of repetition, not only between the social and the literary chapters, but between the first and second parts of the book. Nonetheless, the historical chapters do provide a picture of how the characteristically Victorian attitudes actually emerged.

From time to time, these sections lose the clarity that characterizes part one of the book, mainly because Professor Trudgill wishes to develop individual themes (for example, the relationship of fashion to laxity in sexual attitudes) at the same time that he is presenting a chronological account, beginning in 1750 and extending to 1900. The two methods do not always harmonize. Still, these chapters represent a bold attempt to put the whole question of sexual attitudes into a coherent sequential scheme.

My favorite chapters in this book are the final ones, which deal with the emblematic way in which Victorians viewed women. With a convincing range of reference, Professor Trudgill describes the emergence of the figure of the Madonna as the dominating image associated with the ideal of pure womanhood, and he explains why the image lost its force by the century's end. In a similar manner, Professor Trudgill studies the figure of the Magdalen, which, though originally a negative image, gradually became ambiguously attractive, and finally lost its significance through the "devaluation of virginity, to the level of a technical rather than an absolute measure of purity...."

Professor Trudgill has drawn much of his evidence from literature, but his book is not an exercise in literary criticism. It is basically a study of social customs and attitudes useful to all students of the Victorian period in a general rather than a specific manner. It is the kind of comprehensive, but careful, detailed, and just book that has long been needed.

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