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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

*Stravinsky* by Roman Vlad. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960. Pp. vii + 232. \$7.00.

Without intending to inflict upon Igor Stravinsky the stigma of an ethically culpable creativity, Mr. Vlad has managed with remarkable effectiveness to accomplish just that in this supplemental and expanded version of program notes written by him in 1955-56 for the *Radio-televisione Italiana* presentation of Stravinsky's complete works. Although his discourse reveals throughout an intensely partisan point of view as well as what amounts to an almost desperate zeal in proclaiming Stravinsky's kingly stature in music of the twentieth century, it displays more the character of a defense than an affirmation and the end result seems to be a continuous, albeit valiant, apologia for Stravinsky's consistent history of eclectic pilfering.

Every twentieth century composer has had the same problems which Stravinsky faced in solving the post-romantic dilemma which was inherited from the nineteenth century. Most of those who did not embrace some aspect of the serial technique of Schoenberg and Webern chose instead to expand the existing techniques into a kind of polydiatonic or pandiatonic concept of harmonic and melodic organization, and since within these concepts it was very difficult to create melodic material that was genuinely fresh and new, most composers found it necessary and fruitful to investigate other sources of musical inspiration than those which immediately preceded them in times and place.

Some turned to folk music and there found a reservoir of melodic and sometimes rhythmic raw material. Some became pre-occupied with rhythm and timbre and exploited percussive and heterophonic effects derived from Eastern cultures. Some looked to jazz for their inspiration, and some initiated a cult of simplification to the point of inanity. Others looked backwards to earlier creative expressions, particularly to the 14th, 16th and 18th centuries and a variety of neo-medieval, neo-renaissance and neo-classic trends became widespread. Composers all but became musicological researchers as they investigated the music of other times and other cultures, and at no time in the history of music have they been so educated, so enlightened, so conversant with the old and the exotic. But of all those who chose this basic way of seeking suitably intriguing creative influences, Stravinsky has been the most indefatigable, the most omnivorous, the most insatiable and perhaps the least scrupulous in using the music of others. It was most certainly inevitable that he should ultimately ingest the serial techniques and one can already sense him observing electronic music with a hungry eye.

If it is obvious and apparent to all those who love Stravinsky's music, and particularly to those who know his music analytically, that once he has a pregnant thematic idea he is a veritable sorcerer, it should be at least suspected that he has had some considerable trouble during his creative life in originating his own thematic ideas. He has appeared unable to create a long, flowing melodic line with a genuine inner organic unity which does not derive in some way from

some other source. And all the involved discussions of neo-classicism, ontological time, morphological transformations and the assimilation of all earlier music in the melting pot of his personality, such as we find in Vlad's book, will not make it any less so. Who knows but what the inconsistencies, the changes of direction, the ambivalences, and the vast range of Stravinsky's devouring appetite which Vlad tries so earnestly to reconcile together in one compatible line of creative growth and development may be due to the composer's vulnerability in the most primary incipient stage of writing music—i. e., the creation of a thematic entity with real dimension and contour, with real and continuing melodic significance and identity?

But let us examine how Mr. Vlad interprets Stravinsky's long and continual reliance upon other sources for the incipient thematic impetus to his striking and fantastically inventive craftsmanship. First, it must be pointed out that from *l'Oiseau de Feu* onward there is scarcely a single work by Stravinsky referred to in this text concerning which the author does not admit, indeed call attention to, derivative influences or actual thematic borrowings from other specified sources. These borrowings, unparalleled in the work of any other composer of comparable fame in the history of western music, encompass a panorama which reaches from Gesualdo to Webern, from Lithuanian folk songs to American jazz and includes a significant number of works consisting entirely of second-hand and not always efficaciously refurbished music taken from earlier composers.

Without the slightest literary counterpart of a blush, the author attempts to justify in each separate case, and to defend in general, Stravinsky's right to reconstitute and use these already written works as his own, and the justifications are sufficiently varied to cover the differing degrees and kinds of borrowing which are revealed. Let us cite a few of the many different directions taken by Mr. Vlad's reasoning as he interposes it between Stravinsky and the implicit charges of plagiarism and lack of originality, evidences of which he himself so freely discloses.

1. *Histoire du Soldat* (page 62)

"On the musical side Stravinsky tried to give the work a similarly universal character . . . he draws his material from a variety of sources; from American rag time to Argentine tango; from Swiss brass band to Spanish pasodoble; from Bach's chorales and preludes to the Viennese waltz. . . . All these heterogeneous elements are thrown into the melting pot, and the result is one of Stravinsky's most homogeneous and original works."

2. *Pulcinella* (page 76)

This is "the first in a series of works in which Stravinsky by more or less explicit references to the works of the great composers of the past reconstitutes in the mirror of his own personal idiom a picture of the last 200 years of western musical culture."

3. *Les Noces* (page 71)

". . . This would mean that Stravinsky borrowed two themes for *The Wedding* and not one as he himself claims. On the other hand, in the case of the liturgical motive Stravinsky probably transformed it to such an extent that he felt justified in claiming it as his own."

4. *Concerto for Piano* (page 85)

After pointing out that the most "extraordinary ingredients" have

been gathered together in this piece including strong suggestions of Handel, Bach, Scarlatti, jazz, Vivaldi and Eric Satie, the author concludes that "Stravinsky succeeds once again in taking a vast variety of elements from outside and fusing them in the melting pot of his own personality."

5. *Symphony in 3-Movements* (page 148)

"This is an extremely significant borrowing, though Stravinsky uses it only for more or less structural purposes."

6. *Choral Variations on Bach's Von Himmel Hoch* (page 197)

"The chorale variations are not a mere transcription," nor is this work another example of "taking over ready-made musical ideas and subjecting them to a real process of 'phagocytosis,' . . . the recasting is unparalleled from the morphological standpoint."

In other places we learn that such references to outside sources show "his remarkable flexibility, receptivity and capacity for assimilation" (p. 223); that "he is not hide-bound or dogmatic" (p. 224); that "he has drunk deep from every new source" (p. 223); that it "gives the work more of a punch without actually betraying the spirit and atmosphere of the original" (p. 76).

Once he attempts to provide justification for Stravinsky's "music to the second power" by pointing out that other composers before him have also indulged themselves similarly (Bach, Liszt, p. 76) not realizing apparently that the Bach transcriptions are not at all comparable and that it was primarily this extensive use of second-hand material which induced history to consign Liszt to such a low estate. A comparison with Liszt for moral precedent will condemn Stravinsky, not vindicate him. Once, the direction of his argument implies a rather specious justification on the basis of the large number of other twentieth century composers who have in turn been influenced by Stravinsky (p. 223). Here one is tempted to say "two wrongs don't make a right." Somehow it would appear that Stravinsky's own conscience in the matter might be adduced from this response (found in Robert Craft's *Conversations avec Stravinsky*), which he made when asked if he was interested in the resurrection of Italian masters of the 16th to the 18th century. *A propos* of Pergolesi he replied: "Pulcinella [his own work based entirely on excerpts from numerous Pergolesi compositions] est la seule de [ses] oeuvres que j'aime."

At any rate, in so extensively devoting his energies to the refutation of implied criticism, particularly that criticism which might impugn Stravinsky's creative integrity, Mr. Vlad has in reality served to call undue attention to this aspect of the composer's output and in so doing he has siphoned off some of the reader's admiration for those facets of Stravinsky's genius which *are* genuine and fresh, excitingly new and incisively positive.

For the rest, it must be said that the book is well organized and fluently written, although it would seem to consider the Stravinsky works a bit too technically for the layman while being too superficially descriptive from the point of view of the trained and knowledgeable musician. The language is sometimes ornate and overblown and occasionally soars into a quasi-philosophical discourse of veiled intent and dubious context, as for example in certain passages concerning *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

The author relies rather heavily for documentation upon Stravinsky's own

writings and upon those of his erstwhile amanuensis and musical interpreter, Robert Craft, but provides a sound bibliography and a helpful index of Stravinsky's works at the back of the book. Certain discussions found at some chapter beginnings concerning twentieth century techniques and styles are well done and the partial analyses of those works employing the serial technique are valuable and clear.

However, it must be said that the author's self-assumed role of biased protagonist keeps his book from being a significantly objective contribution to the critical assessment of Stravinsky's role in twentieth century composition.

RUTH S. WYLIE

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*Rainer Maria Rilke: Masks and the Man* by H. F. Peters. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960. Pp. xiv + 226. \$5.75.

Mr. Peters judiciously anticipates the astonished exclamation ("What! Another Rilke book!?" ) by disavowing any intention of adding "yet another critical study to the already large library of Rilke literature" (p. ix). He announces two reasons for writing the present volume: first, "to show Rilke's impact on modern poetry"; and, second, "to present Rilke's poetry to the English-speaking reader in such a form that he will be stirred to read it" (p. ix). It is my feeling that he succeeds only partially in both regards.

A whole volume might well be devoted to the first question, which is treated in the opening chapter and, although frequent opportunity presents itself in the course of the text, is not mentioned again. Beginning with a very apt quotation from Auden, Mr. Peters demonstrates with well-chosen examples how Rilke gradually became known, was critically accepted and ultimately acclaimed in England, France, the United States, and Germany. But with the exception of one lonely passage from Sidney Keyes' "The Foreign Gate" he makes no effort to show us with concrete examples how Rilke affected subsequent poets, as, for instance, Belmore does in his study of *Rilke's Craftsmanship*. Instead, Mr. Peters cites publication statistics, lists translators, quotes reviews. This is all very edifying, and it reveals the author's impressive knowledge of the Rilke bibliography—one is tempted in many cases to say: of the Rilke hagiography—but it fails to explain precisely what we would like to know: Is Rilke merely a *pièce de résistance* for cocktail-party chatter, or did his poetry actually transform the literary art of subsequent times?

In the remaining seven chapters Rilke's major works, which are taken up in chronological order, are discussed in the light of a few predominant symbols that reflect the central themes of the poet: the will to transformation, along with its opposite pole of Narcissism; and, generally speaking, the conflict within Rilke between the extremes of Poet or Saint. The image of the Mask (with its corresponding antithesis, the Narcissistic mirror), which Rilke employs extensively in his early poems, the *New Poems*, and the autobiographical novel *Malte Laurids Brigge*, is considered at the outset as the broad symbol that embraces these themes and encompasses subsequent images that the poet affects

in his works: dolls, angels, Orpheus, roses, and others. Mr. Peters argues persuasively that the Mask is not only an artistic device occurring in the poetry, but also a psychic defense-mechanism that Rilke adopted in his own life in order to protect himself from the personal encroachments of even his closest friends and to provide a façade behind which he might peacefully distil his personality so as to be pure enough to reverberate to the poetry of which he considered himself but the humble vessel. The procedure of symbol analysis is especially effective for the *Book of Hours*, the *New Poems*, and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Between the *Book of Hours* and the *New Poems* Rilke swung from the pole of Saint to that of Poet; the spiritual exhaustion that followed the *New Poems* and *Malte* was overcome in the *Duino Elegies*; and the conflicting themes and images, according to Mr. Peters, were finally reconciled in the ultimate vision of Orpheus in the breath-taking poetic achievement of the sonnets, which were precipitated in part by Valéry's conception of the dance as metamorphosis. In a book aimed at an English-speaking audience Mr. Peters succeeds remarkably well in conveying an impression of the union of sound and image that obtains in many of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*. The last chapter deals with Rilke's late poems under the sign of the rose as an expression of the theme of contradiction, which Mr. Peters ties in very neatly with his earlier remarks on masks as a central image. For under his various masks Rilke was able to utter contradictory statements that have long been a source of perplexed despair for the critics, and within individual poems this proclivity for contradiction precipitates itself in the form of paradox. A consideration on the nature of paradox leads Mr. Peters to his concluding remarks, in which he sums up his own view of Rilke: "His apotheosis of the paradox, the pure contradiction, means that, while he did not find the certainty of faith . . . he found a precarious equilibrium between hope and despair and affirmed it so fervently that feelings of faith are aroused in the reader" (p. 187). Thus Mr. Peters assumes a sane position of moderation between the cultists who claim almost religious validity for Rilke's poetry and the cynics who regard his visions as acceptable only to a deranged mind. It is a very satisfactory position, for it allows the reader to enjoy the ambiguity of the poetry aesthetically without feeling compelled to search out a rigorous system of thought behind them. For Rilke, as the author repeatedly stresses, was a magnificent poet, but not an original thinker.

The method of thematic interpretation works well for the *Book of Hours* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, which are dominated by—indeed, emerge from—a central image; and for the *New Poems*, which vary so greatly in substance and theme that one can reasonably expect only the analysis of selected examples. The method does not lend itself so adequately, however, to *Malte Laurids Brigge* and the *Duino Elegies*. In the case of the novel, which is discussed under the perceptive heading "Hamlet in Paris," Mr. Peters, taking Rilke's word for the fact that "he had no plan, no plot, no clear idea of precisely what he wanted to do" (p. 75), never attempts to indicate that the book actually does consist of more than "a number of powerful but transparently autobiographical scenes" (p. 83). These remarks are true enough, of course, but the novel also has a clear symbolic structure that offers, as a matter of fact, much grist for Mr. Peters' mill. Thus the parable of the Prodigal Son, which Rilke retells at the end of his book, is shown to be an expression of the themes of love and fear; but it is not interpreted as

the keystone of a novel in which the themes of childhood and love are treated, respectively, in parts one and two, and then resolved at the last minute by Rilke's unique conception of the Biblical parable. Nor does Mr. Peters mention the important transitional scene between the two parts of the book—the description of the Cluny tapestries of the Dame à Licorne—as a poetic extension of the symbols of the mirror and the theme of Narcissism, which he discusses in an earlier chapter. Likewise, it is undeniable that dolls and angels are key symbols in the *Duino Elegies*, but these poems, unlike the *New Poems*, depend on the structure of the entire cycle for their meaning and their effect. Not only does each of the ten elegies have a form of its own; the poems also form a sequence and a whole. The unity and full meaning of the elegies does not emerge from the discussion of dolls and angels, although Mr. Peters' interpretation of the symbols does indeed extend the basic theme of his study.

Although he refers widely—and sometimes almost indiscriminately, one feels—to world literature from Dante to Valéry, Mr. Peters all too frequently neglects the deeper implications of superficial similarities: implications that certainly affect any view of Rilke's "impact" on modern poetry. Thus Mr. Peters does not relate the mask symbol to the theme that might be called *homo compositus* and that plays a major role in modern literature from Yeats and Musil to Camus and Faulkner. Mr. Peters is also visibly distressed by the question of Rilke's mysticism, to which he constantly returns. "Rilke was no mystic in the true sense of the word. For the true mystic negates the world: Rilke affirmed it" (p. 59). The whole difficulty lies, I think, in the author's own too narrow definition of mysticism, for he insists that "the true mystic distrusts his senses and mortifies the flesh" (p. 59). Mr. Peters is thinking here only of the hair-robe variety, whereas Rilke was actually one of the countless modern writers who, in a reaction against naturalism and science, placed their faith in an anti-intellectual perception of true being behind the empirical mask of reality—an attitude that can justifiably be called mysticism and that can be found in Maeterlinck, Proust, Joyce, Yeats, Hofmannsthal, and many others around the turn of the century. Mr. Peters finally concedes that "there are areas of close agreement between Rilke's thought and that of the East" although Rilke was a "typically Western artist" (p. 193). I personally would be inclined, instead of posing these two alternatives as antitheses, to resolve them by asserting that Rilke has close affinities with Eastern thought precisely *because* he is a typically "modern" Western artist, and thereby, instead of isolating Rilke, place him in the tradition that, since Schopenhauer, has linked writers and thinkers as disparate as Jung, Spengler, Nietzsche, Hesse, Rolland, Yeats, and many others.

The individual interpretations are, in general, satisfactory and illuminating; but I have very serious reservations about the analysis of "The Panther" as an illustration of Rilke's conception of "the miracle," as Mr. Peters implies in his detailed exegesis (p. 106). In poems like "The Donor," "Saint George," or "The Unicorn" Rilke portrays moments of intense concentration and inner preparedness for the mystical advent of a miracle. "The Panther" is quite different: though in the last stanza the reader is forced to identify himself with the panther, the point of the poem is the penetration through empirical reality to the very essence of the portrayed object. It is indeed a "mystical" poem insofar as Rilke, dissatisfied with phenomenal appearance, relies on intuitive empathy for the projection into the panther, but it has nothing to do with a "miracle" in the definition that Mr. Peters has borrowed from Weigand's article.

Mr. Peters' book practically begs for comparison with Ellmann's *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, with which it has far more in common than the inverted title. Both studies, namely, attempt to bridge the gap between factual biography and purely critical studies by means of the mask and related symbols that play a key role in the life and works of both poets. It is thus surprising, in a work that explicitly purports to "locate" Rilke within the framework of modern poetry, to encounter only one casual reference to Yeats, the poet who more than T. S. Eliot and Valéry (who along with Rilke form, according to Peters, the major triumvirate of twentieth-century poetry) could illuminate by comparison and contrast Mr. Peters' conception of Rilke. For in Yeats we have not only the same central image of the Mask, but also, *mutatis mutandis*, the essential will to transformation, the concern with mysticism, the rose symbol, and the conflict between poet and saint.

Mr. Peters has read his Rilke long, well, and with love. As a result his interpretations of the poems and his remarks on the function of Rilke's symbols stem from an organic conception of the poet's life and works. The main fault of the book lies not in the author's knowledge or sensitivity, but in his lack of a consistent point of view, which is as misleading in a critical study as in a novel. In the first place, Mr. Peters shifts kaleidoscopically back and forth between interpretation, criticism, refutation of other critics, and biography, thereby often shattering a clear line of development in his own exegesis and leaving a blurred impression with the reader. And in the second place, he relies far too heavily on secondary sources, quoting when his own words would have been more to the point, and displaying a pronounced tendency to footnote the obvious ("thin-lipped academic critics"). This leads inevitably to the perpetuation of dubious insights (e. g. the remarks on Kafka, p. 44, or the littero-mystical jargon on p. 175), to quotation that is misleading out of context (e. g. the quotation from Demetz, p. 50), and to a sort of spurious literary arithmetic, whereby the author adds the perfectly good pears of Miss Butler to Weigand's sound apples and then offers us the sum in bananas (e. g. the miraculous in "The Panther"). I, for one, would have been much happier if Mr. Peters had omitted half of his 628 footnoted references and had devoted the space to an extension of his own observations on the development of themes and symbols, allowing room when necessary (*Malte* and the *Duino Elegies*) for at least brief mention of the structure within which the symbols operate and for a hint, at least, to the English-speaking audience, that Rilke's sonnet and elegy forms are not otherwise typical in German. Yet as it stands, the book offers a view of Rilke that is not available in the numerous biographies, interpretations, and critical studies, and the author's enthusiasm is contagious.

THEODORE ZIOLKOWSKI

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*Burns: A Study of the Poems and Songs* by Thomas Crawford. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960. Pp. xv + 400. \$6.50.

It is a curious fact that, despite the immense literature on Burns which has accumulated over the last century and a half, it has been only within very



recent years that serious critical attention has been devoted to Burns's poetry. In this respect, as in some others, Burns has shared the same fate as Byron: criticism of his work has been neglected in favor of biography. And yet, in the last analysis, it is their poetry which makes Burns and Byron important to us; there are fascinating personalities in every generation, but great creative artists are extremely rare. Nevertheless, in the great welter of "lives" and miscellaneous Burnsiana no really thorough attempt to come to grips with Burns's poetry as such was made before David Daiches' critical study in 1952. Thus Daiches' book was, amazingly enough, the pioneer effort in Burns criticism.

Now we have Thomas Crawford's *Burns: A Study of the Poems and Songs*, which is by all odds the best book on Burns since Daiches', and in some respects is the finest treatment of Burns to be found anywhere. The author is a native Scot who was born and reared in Edinburgh but now teaches at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Dr. Crawford's study of the poems and songs is, on the whole, a more exclusively critical treatment than Daiches' and is generally more detailed and thoroughgoing. The author examines Burns's poetic development in a roughly chronological fashion. The first six chapters (192 pages) discuss Burns's growth as a poet up to the publication of the Kilmarnock volume of 1786. In this section of the book is an interesting account of Burns's poetic apprenticeship, followed by careful critical analyses of the great poems and most of the minor pieces which Burns wrote during this first splendid creative period. The two chapters (85 pages) which come next are devoted to discussion of the middle phase of the poet's career—the achievements of his Edinburgh experience and subsequent settlement in Dumfriesshire. These chapters take us from 1786 to the composition of "Tam O'Shanter" in 1791. The final section (91 pages) consists of a long chapter on the songs (the last phase) and a conclusion on Burns as a world poet.

Two themes which run all the way through Crawford's book are notable as more or less new interpretations in Burns criticism: his theory of Burns's use of language, and his emphasis on the development of Burns's political thought. The author points out that the old generalization that Burns is an effective poet only when writing in his native Scots tongue is not really valid. Burns is often extremely powerful when writing standard English, and Crawford amply demonstrates this truth, demonstrates it more fully and convincingly than any earlier critic has done. Furthermore, he contends that Burns gets some of his best effects through a skillful intermingling and juxtaposition of his Scots and English styles. These effects are apparent in a great many of Burns's songs ("A Red, Red Rose," "Mary Morison," "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast," etc.), and in a surprisingly large proportion of the poems. Relatively few of Burns's pieces are in pure Scots or in standard English; most of them are mixtures of various Scots and English styles which Burns consciously manipulates as though they were different strings of a musical instrument. Crawford is mainly sound and convincing in his development of this thesis. He argues, furthermore, that some of Burns's passages which are clearly reminiscent of earlier or contemporary English poets and which have therefore usually been deplored as second-rate imitations are nevertheless poetically effective in their special contexts. In this respect the author sometimes pushes his thesis too far, especially in his critiques of "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and "The Vision." His attempt to defend and justify the two poems on these grounds is, in my view, unsuccessful. The jarring disunity

of tone and language in both pieces simply cannot be justified artistically by the linguistic theory of the author. Though even he cannot swallow the preposterous passage on the villainous seducer in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," he struggles manfully but unconvincingly to praise the rest of the poem. Despite the fact that Crawford goes much too far here and in two or three other places, on the whole his discussion of Burns's use of language is original and illuminating.

Another important strand which runs all the way through Crawford's study is his treatment of Burns's political thought. "Almost everything that Burns ever wrote was political, in the broadest sense of that word. The central core of all his thought was his exploration of the Scottish predicament." There is more careful analysis of this aspect of Burns's development here than is to be found anywhere else. It must be admitted, however, that Crawford's keen interest in Burns's politics leads him into lengthy discussions of several mediocre or downright bad poems. Also, the author's treatment of this theme tends to leave the impression that Burns was considerably more of an intellectual than the evidence would warrant. Granted that the poet was a man of strong and penetrating mental power and keen curiosity, it may well be doubted that he was as consciously perceptive of current political philosophies as Crawford implies. Despite these objections, however, the author's detailed study of Burns's political views is an important and valuable contribution to our understanding of the poet's mind.

Analyses of individual poems are generally excellent. The author shows sound critical judgment and his painstaking attention to detail gives significant new insights into many of the poems. He is especially good on sound effects throughout and includes in an appendix illuminating specimens of phonetic patterns in Burns's work. There are, of course, occasional slips; in his discussion of "The Jolly Beggars," for example, Crawford treats two of the female characters (the "raucle carlin" whom the caird takes from the fiddler and the "dame" whom the fiddler finally gets "behind the chicken cavie") as though they were one and the same. Despite this error, however, his analysis of "The Jolly Beggars" is basically sound and penetrating. His critiques of most of the major poems—especially of the verse epistles, "Holy Willie's Prayer," "Death and Dr. Hornbook," "Halloween," "To a Mouse," "The Holy Fair," and "Tam O'Shanter"—are most satisfying; and he has, in addition, some enlightening things to say about several of the minor and little known pieces such as "A Mauchline Wedding."

One of the highlights of this book is the author's account of Burns's relations with the Kirk. His second chapter, entitled "Calvin's Well," is the clearest and most brilliant exposition of eighteenth-century Calvinist doctrine and of Burns's attitudes toward it that I have ever seen. Crawford's handling of this part of the poet's experience is, I think, extraordinarily skillful.

The last chapter is short but full of substance, presenting the author's conclusions as to the central characteristics of Burns's poems and as to his stature as a world poet. He sees in Burns's work four main interests: love (most often expressed as physical desire); comradeship between man and man; "the uniqueness and sanctity of individual human beings" (as opposed to the conformist pressures and dogmas of society); and the poet's cult of the "Honest Man." Crawford has high praise for Burns's songs and for his satires. The songs, he contends, represent a profoundly original use of folk materials. Also, he ranks

Burns as one of the three or four greatest British verse satirists, and, after Chaucer, the first of non-dramatic comic poets in our literature. In a final summing up, he places Burns among the great poets of the second rank (below the giant figures of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton), in the distinguished company of such men as Marlowe, Donne, Dryden, Blake, Wordsworth, Browning, and Yeats.

Altogether, this book is a most important and enlightening contribution to Burns scholarship. It is fully and carefully documented and indexed, and written in a clear and lively style. Dr. Crawford brings to bear upon his subject a trained and sensitive critical mind as well as impressive erudition. His wide-ranging knowledge of the cultural background of eighteenth-century Scotland provides a solid basis for his judgments. Clearly, this book is a milestone in the long history of Burns studies; with it the modern scholarly criticism of Burns may be said to have come of age.

ALLAN H. MACLAINE

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*The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* by Marshall Suther. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960. Pp. 232. \$5.00.

This is not a study that concentrates, as does Lowes' famous *Road to Xanadu*, on "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," or as Nethercot's *Road to Tryernaine* on "Christabel," or as Elizabeth Schneider's *Coleridge, Opium, and Kubla Khan* on "Kubla Khan," or as Adrien Bonjour's *Coleridge's "Hymn before Sunrise"* on the poem of that name; rather it concentrates upon Coleridge's "Ode to Dejection" as the crucial poem in his poetic career. The special flavor or bouquet of this book comes from the fact that it is a study of "Dejection" in the light of three works: *The Situation of Poetry* by Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, *L'Ame Romantique et le Rêve* and *Poésie et Mystique* by Albert Béguin.

A problem any poet faces is that of continuing to be a poet after his twenty-fifth or thirtieth year. It is a problem raised by Eliot in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent." A poet cannot continue to write out of his own early experiences without soon running dry or exhausting his theme. He has, therefore, to find subjects that are not of immediate personal concern, in fact, the further away from his personal concerns the better; he has to dramatize, to express "significant emotion"; he has to pour the often painful experience of his own life into an "objective correlative." We all know how poorly Coleridge, and Wordsworth for that matter, solved this problem, and how Tennyson continued to sing dulcetly, but in a falsetto voice.

The causes for Coleridge's discouragement are complex and many possible reasons for the dampening of his poetic genius have been advanced. There is no doubt that to some extent Wordsworth acted as dampener; this topic has been ably treated by I. A. Richards in an article, "Coleridge the Vulnerable Poet," in *Yale Review* (June, 1959). Opium may have caused a relaxation, a substitution of dreaming for doing. The unfulfilled love for Sara Hutchinson may be blamed, and it undoubtedly had a withering effect; yet unhappy love does not inevitably end in poetic barrenness, as witness Dante and Beatrice, or Yeats and Maud

Gonne. Coleridge himself blames his deep studies in metaphysics, in which he tried to drown his sorrows. One of the virtues of Suther's book is that this reason for Coleridge's poetic unfruitfulness is critically examined and found not to be valid. Suther points out rightly that poetry and metaphysics can go hand in hand: Coleridge's "philosophical activities continued through the period of greatest poetic production, 1794-99, and included his first contact with Kant, one of the important philosophical influences in his life" (p. 23). None of these are authentic reasons. The blame for Coleridge's failure to write major poetry after "Dejection" must be placed where it belongs, namely on Coleridge himself: it is primarily a failure of the will, a failure in poetic discipline. Yeats and Eliot in our time have given magnificent examples of how it is possible to write poetry after the initial impetus of youth is over.

Mr. Suther does a close reading of "Dejection," having prepared for this by a study of Coleridge's characteristic imagery; he observes, for instance, that "the light of noonday had never presided over Coleridge's poetic activity" (p. 77). He remarks on the startling change that had come over Coleridge's feeling by the time we reach "Dejection"; nature, instead of being impregnated with divinity, has become corpselike.

The central concern of Mr. Suther's study is partly revealed in the title, *The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. The "dark night" has obvious reference to mystics, to St. John of the Cross particularly. A great deal is made of a distinction between the poetic experience and the mystic experience, a distinction that has been made by Jacques Maritain. Coleridge, Mr. Suther claims, expected too much from the poetic experience, more than the poetic experience can be asked to bear; he expected the mystic's reward of the unitive life. Mr. Suther, taking his cue from the Maritains, thinks that the proper issue of the poetic experience is the poem; the proper issue of the mystic experience is silence, the dark night, and the mystic's discipline, in other words, the religious *tao* or way, culminating in the ecstatic bliss of the annihilation of self in unity of being.

Now I am far from being as certain as Mr. Suther seems to be that some of Coleridge's early experiences when he stood, "silent, with swimming sense," were not mystic. I do not question the validity of the experiences: it would be like saying, "Mr. Keats, you did not hear the nightingale," or "Mr. Coleridge, you did not see the level sunshine glimmer with green light through the stalks of flax" ("Fears in Solitude"), or the western sky "and its peculiar tint of yellow green" ("Dejection"). But the truth is that Coleridge had neither the discipline to become a mystic of the order of St. John of the Cross or St. Theresa, nor to continue writing major poetry after the supreme effort of the "Mariner" and the swan-song of "Dejection." Had he had it, much of his dejection would have been exorcised; he would have vanquished despair in the joy of poetic creation.

One of the most interesting sections of Mr. Suther's book is found in the final chapter called "The Romantic Echee." Mr. Suther observes that Coleridge seems indeed to be a *rara avis*, a bird of strange plumage, when set against the sober eighteenth century, Wordsworth and Southey, but he is less startling when put among his peers, Poe (though for some reason Poe isn't mentioned), Baudelaire, Nerval, Rimbaud, Yeats. The comparison between Coleridge and Rimbaud is particularly stimulating, for the reason that there is a real basis for it. Nevertheless Coleridge, with his Biedermeier sensibility (for instance, the lines about

"my pensive Sara" and "our lot o'ergrown / With the white-flower'd Jasmin" in "The Eolian Harp"), was hardly as resolute a rebel as Rimbaud. The later Coleridge is compared in an interesting way to the later Yeats, and Mr. Suther remarks that "The Garden of Boccaccio" is Coleridge's version of "Sailing to Byzantium." It even happens that Coleridge's song from *Zapolya* has a golden bird, yet how light is that little song compared to the massive significance of Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium." One especially fascinating comment is made when it is suggested that Coleridge never exploited the resources of poetry as magic, though in "Kubla Khan" he seemed about to do so.

Mr. Suther's book is a sensitive and valuable addition to the literature on Coleridge, yet his failure to use the Kathleen Coburn edition of the notebooks and the final Earl Leslie Griggs edition of the letters is mysterious and unaccountable, especially in view of his several references to Kathleen Coburn. Aside from this lapse (which seems to make his scholarship on Coleridge a little antiquated), his book is enriched by flashes of shrewdness or piquancy ("I am always suspicious of Sara and the skillet of boiling milk"), and his remarks on the psychoanalysis of Coleridge or the psychoanalytic criticism of Coleridge's poems seem to me eminently sane.

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*Style in Art: The Dynamics of Art as Cultural Expression* by Lincoln Rothchild. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960. Pp. 175, plates. \$6.00.

Of the numerous attempts to trace the origins of art, the theories least to Mr. Rothchild's liking are those that stress art's genesis in play, fantasy, escape or any other non-serious, not socially directed motive. By the same token, he is opposed to those who view style as something whimsical or superficial. For him, art is "human experience aesthetically enhanced and organically perfected for expansion of the scope of human attention," while it is the function of style "to summarize much that is deeply significant about a person or a society." Rothchild's attitude towards art may be resented by those contemporary abstract-expressionists, action-painters, tachistes and the like who refuse to admit any connection between their activities and the needs and desires of the society of which, all their protests notwithstanding, they are part, for the author defines style as "those aspects of form that are correlated to produce a *socially desirable* expression consciously or unconsciously intended by the artist."

One may object to the two words that I have italicized, for a great deal of progressive art (the mature work of Rembrandt, and almost the entire output of Cézanne are good examples) is often so far advanced in both form and content as to be undesirable to the very society in which its creator is living. On the other hand, Rothchild's attitude (related to that of John Dewey) may be welcomed by those who do not wish to forget the close relationship between style and social circumstances, who feel that artists, in order to create worthwhile objects, must be thoroughly sensitive to basic social forces, cannot help being influenced by the very forces that impel civilized humans to live in groups. The author assails the notion that artists, however great, stand entirely outside society, instead

of being shaped by it. But what about Rembrandt or Cézanne whom we have mentioned above? The author does not refer to them specifically, but they were not above and beyond society merely because their work was misunderstood by the conservative or, if one prefers the term, reactionary, sectors of the art world: "The categorically revolutionary quality of genius *seems* to be supported by the need vital personalities have felt at times in the past, to reject stultifying conventions imposed by narrow social groups. In such cases it might be said, however, that the society itself must be judged eccentric in relation to basic natural impulses of human personality, and dissent considered a sign of true or larger social identification" (Rothschild's italics).

Thus, Mr. Rothschild's position does not—as do totalitarian systems—exclude the nonconformist, since he may very well have his ear closer to the heart of the people than the socially more acceptable producers as well as consumers of art. His philosophy excludes, however, all that is frivolous, merely entertaining, or a means to conceal unenjoyable or menacing features of reality. Logically, he is opposed to the prevailing abstract styles which, to him, appear as "an expression primarily of privileged, self-centered people with no practical concern." Of course, a critic is privileged to have likes and dislikes, as is every appreciator of art. But no artistic manifestation, however loathsome or inferior it might seem, may be eliminated if one wishes to set up an aesthetic theory valid beyond rigid partisanship. For at all times there has been "escapist" art along with the creations, with deeply significant motivations, of socially conscious men. It is good to be reminded, for a change, of the socio-economic reasons behind art, to see stylistic transformation correlated to shifts in the "mode of doing" on the part of both artist and society, and to hear precision, rhythm, logic, craftsmanship extolled as the means whereby the artist can exert his power over the environment from which he grew. But in order to interpret style in an "objective and scientific fashion," as the author set out to do, he is required to avoid one-sidedness and bias, and to connect social patterns with *all* forms of artistic expression.

The approximately ninety small black-and-white illustrations following the text, printed in off-set and not always very clear, illuminate the author's frank, unequivocal position. For in these samples of art, reaching from paleolithic cave-drawings to pieces done in the 1950's, art with an easily identifiable social message predominates, while the specimens of abstract and surrealist art are dealt with somewhat negatively in the accompanying comments. On the other hand, the writer holds no brief for academic art, however easy to read and however carefully executed. Thus, contrasting a Venus by Cabanel with one of the shocking women painted by De Kooning, he observes that the French artist's unoriginal painting "ignores the vigorous advances in the social and economic life" in the artist's time, and expresses his preference for the rather brutal, more original De Kooning "despite its outspoken antagonism to womanhood."

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New York

*Dryden's Aeneid and Its Seventeenth Century Predecessors* by L. Proudfoot.  
New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1960. Pp. vii + 279. \$7.00.

In this study of Dryden's *Aeneis*, Mr. Proudfoot attempts a wide range of topics: he moves from Dryden's use of earlier translations, to critical estimates of these translations, to an evaluation of Dryden's work both in itself and in relation to the tradition of seventeenth-century Virgilian translation. But though his intentions are both valid and interesting, his book is neither. It is not merely superficial and incomplete, to an inexplicable degree; it is also beset by frequent self-contradictions, a general lack of clarity, and by major errors of fact and judgment.

The author first sets out to determine Dryden's sources in Book IV. Using only 17th century heroic couplet translations, he selects parallels almost entirely on the basis of similar rhyme words, yet often tries, in his scattered commentary, to judge other kinds of borrowings and poetic effects through these parallels. Apart from the basic confusion of method here—he selects his tools in one way and tries to make them do a job for which they are not equipped—he further invalidates almost all his conclusions by omitting Fanshawe's Spenserian stanza version of Book IV, as not relevant to Dryden or the tradition (pp. 97-98). Yet he could—to take examples chosen according to his own method—have found in Fanshawe the source of both of Dryden's rhyme words (XXXV, "name-shame"), while the sources Mr. Proudfoot gives have only one ("name"). Or, in XXII, he would have found in Fanshawe not only Dryden's rhyme scheme, but striking similarities of syntax and diction, whereas the "source" he cites, Godolphin, differs from Dryden in every possible way save the rhyme words. It is Mr. Proudfoot, not Dryden, who has "ignored Fanshawe" (p. 97).

Even less explicable is the author's unreliable handling of those sources he has chosen to consider. He sometimes, for instance, omits completely both Dryden's line and its closely parallel source (cf. Dryden, l. 235 with Godolphin, l. 172). More often he reaches misleading conclusions, and since he supplies only partial or inaccurate substantiation, the reader has no way of recognizing the error. (An amusing though minor example is his assertion in LXXXI that the term "seek," in a line otherwise drawn from Denham and Ogilby, is Dryden's own; yet "seek" is used by virtually every other translator, including two Mr. Proudfoot himself numbers among Dryden's sources, Godolphin and Vicars.)

In the second part of the book, easily its most meaningful section, Proudfoot offers a few longer passages from each translation—especially valuable since some are scarce and inaccessible—together with comments. But a look at Surrey's 16th century blank verse translation would have modified some of his conclusions about the originality of *Didos Death*, as well as its significance for Stapylton and the tradition. Nor is *Didos Death* "the first recorded rendering of any part of Virgil into heroic couplets" (p. 99). The author may be deliberately ignoring Gavin Douglas's Scotch translation of 1553, but Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, 1601, contains, in the passage on Fame, an early example of a 17th century English heroic couplet translation which certainly ought to have been referred to here and in the preceding discussion of sources. Such omissions, along with a failure to relate these translations to the broader literary backgrounds of the period, also mar Mr. Proudfoot's treatment of other aspects of this "tradition"—developments in language and in the heroic couplet.

In the final chapters, Mr. Proudfoot returns to Dryden, and despite an in-

adequate grasp of the prefatory Dedication of the *Aeneis* (his own comment, p. 208, suggests a casual reading) he launches vigorous attacks against its critical attitudes. Among his many serious misapprehensions, one may note his remarks that Dryden was aware only of sound and simile in Virgil's style (p. 263), or that the poet defended his Latinisms in terms of sound and ignored meaning (p. 232).

His handling of the Latin text raises numerous other problems. He seems, for example, wholly unaware of the complexity of "pietas" (and of Dryden's discussion of it in the Dedication) when he lists Dryden's translation of "insignem pietate," "so brave, so just," among many examples of doublets used pointlessly as "metrical expedients" (p. 252). Equally disturbing is an earlier error (LXXVII, p. 61). Where Virgil speaks of *maxima Juno* and *Saturnius pater*, Godolphin keeps only "Jove," and Dryden adds "Juno." Proudfoot, evidently not understanding "Saturnius pater," comments on Godolphin's "Jove" as wrong, and on Dryden's use of "Juno" as a correction!

Less important, yet also indicative, is Mr. Proudfoot's use of the date 1692, in his chapter on Nisus and Euryalus, as if it were the date of Dryden's complete *Aeneis* (published in 1697); and his use of *Aeneid* for Dryden's work—without explanation—instead of Dryden's own title, *Aeneis*.

In a book which deals with material that is involved and inaccessible, the reader must be able to trust the writer completely. He must assume that the author has chosen and examined his materials wisely, presented them accurately, and has grasped his subject sufficiently well to reach valid conclusions. Unfortunately, Mr. Proudfoot inspires mistrust on all these counts.

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*An Approach to "Hamlet"* by L. C. Knights. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961. Pp. 91. \$2.75.

Purveyors of science keep reiterating that wide acceptance of a theory is not necessarily proof of its validity, also that a simple explanation may conceivably partake of simplicity, and also that so-called facts may become extremely complex phenomena as stronger attention is directed at them. Literary criticism is, of course, an extremely inexact science. But the ego-defending-itself in literary interpretation and judgment sometimes seems vehement in inverse proportion to the possibility of exactitude. The real value of an Empson, *pace* Gardner and Tuve, is not whether he is right or wrong. It is that Empson has taught us not to be either cocksure or definitive concerning the poetic artifact. This does not mean that all glosses are equally valid. It does mean that the either-or perception is suspect, and that consensus of value is just that, and not what it is often thought to be, univocal explanation which sees only one meaning. That *Othello* is a great play, no one will deny. But that its greatness necessitates only one, supernal, rigid interpretation is naïve. Furthermore, the history of art is just as full of masterpieces being thrown aside as it is of such being cherished. Again, as T. S. Eliot has affirmed, each age has certain biases that make it interested in



certain aspects of certain works—and uninterested, as Eliot does not say, in what later times choose to elevate.

Like everybody else who earns his wages through teaching literature, I have my own *Hamlet*. Perhaps that is why my opinion of the work being reviewed is very high. Yet it had to overcome some steep prejudices. I do not like L. C. Knights' other books very much. His *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?* is tendentious, and unfair to Bradley. His notion in *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* that the Elizabethan age was kitchless in its prose style is plain foolishness. And in *Explorations* Shakespeare's *mind* is just as resistless a temptation to him as to Traversi, and to a thousand other British critics who apparently think it non-U to regard a Shakespeare play as a play. To trace the permutations of that marvelous sensibility, *that* is the thing to do!

But in this little book Professor Knights gives us a Hamlet who is both original and convincing. He insists, correctly, that we are not to view the play through the Prince's eyes: we are to view it and him through our own eyes, and *understand* the melancholy Dane, not swallow him whole as the finest idealist of Western Civilization. To Knights Hamlet is an incomplete creature who cannot absorb the fact of evil into his world-view. Evil overwhelms him and paralyzes his spiritual growth. Hence his thoughts and acts require careful scrutiny in order that we may see him as a hero manqué.

There are extremely fine new but convincing insights in Knights' paragraphs concerning the Ghost, Fortinbras, Osric, and others. Knights reads the play apart from our own and others' preconceptions, and we are forced, if we listen to him, to throw away some of our mouldy sureties and regard the play as though we had never seen it before. If criticism does this, it can have no higher praise. Knights' essay is the best Shakespeare criticism I have read in many a long day.

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