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Book Reviews

"*My Echoing Song*": *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism* by Rosalie L. Colie.
Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1970. Pp. xvi + 315. \$11.00.

Marvell's Pastoral Art by Donald M. Friedman. Berkeley and Los Angeles:
University of California Press, 1970. Pp. vii + 300. \$6.95.

The difficulties connected with the 1681 edition of Marvell's *Miscellaneous Poems* are not limited to the meretricious preface signed by Marvell's "wife," the cancellation of the "Horatian Ode" in most of the extant copies, and the peculiar arrangement of the poems themselves, exhibiting as it does pieces sometimes in apparently proper and intended juxtaposition, sometimes intermixing poems in Latin and some occasional pieces in prose. Despite the fact that we know little about the dating of most of these poems, and even less about whatever authorial sanction lies behind their arrangement in this edition, or perhaps because of these *lacunae*, the practice of interpreting Marvell's pre-Restoration poems as if they formed some more-or-less coherent and single corpus has become increasingly the habit with critics who have recently embarked on full-length studies of this poetry. The present wave of Marvell studies began with Robert Ellrodt, *Les Poètes Métaphysiques Anglais* (1960), Lawrence Hyman's *Andrew Marvell* (1964) in the Twayne series, and Harold E. Toliver's *Marvell's Ironic Vision* in 1965. John M. Wallace in *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* (1968) continued in the vein of these previous studies to read Marvell's poetry as forming a recognizably coherent record of the poet's moral and political philosophy. The two present studies explore this same approach with varying degrees of consistency and success. Donald Friedman's study attempts to read all of Marvell's pre-Restoration poems as unified by their employing the language and vision conventionally identified with Renaissance pastoral poetry. Professor Friedman carries out this enterprise only sporadically, the pastoral motifs becoming for the most part the excuse rather than the rationale for a series of discrete readings of individual poems in the mode which has become a standard current approach to Renaissance literature, one which joins history of ideas with close critical reading. Professor Colie's study, on the other hand, in her phenomenological approach to defining the problematics of Marvell's poetry, represents not only a new advance in the reading of Marvell, but also the most important methodological achievement in the criticism of the Renaissance lyrics since Rosemond Tuve's *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (1947).

Marvell's poetry has always presented a special case to the student of the Renaissance lyric. Like Ravel in an analogous position in the history of music, Marvell's historical position gave him a survey of the field of Renaissance themes and conventions which perforce included eminently visible strata of classical and medieval versions of these same themes and conventions. And like Ravel, Marvell exploited the conventions of this heritage to achieve a cool, honed, almost infinitely allusive art, all the more elusive in that it seemed to gather together

with scrupulous economy and tact all those strata out of which his own poetry had evolved. If we compare Ravel with Schumann, or Marvell with Spenser, we discover at once the difference between the artistic forms, conventions, and intentions which characterize a style at its apogee, and the same ones in the hands of an artist for whom this style has become one the formal perfections of which are to be exploited for their own sake. There is a direct seriousness, a (comparatively) naive commitment to the viability of these conventions in Spenser and Schumann; but for Ravel and Marvell the awareness of these as forming part of the history of human artistic expression almost outweighs their commitments to them as expressions of human experience *per se*. This is the reason that both artists tended to write one, or at best, two examples of each "kind" in their art, summing up and perhaps finally exhausting the potentialities of their genres in a way that would not have been possible, or perhaps even conceivable, to their forbears. In Marvell's case particularly, it has become increasingly apparent that our apprehension of the meanings of "The Garden," or "Upon Appleton House," or the "Dialogue Between the Soul and Body" can in no way be sundered from our awareness of the poetic and philosophical traditions out of which they arise. And this fact in turn has opened up at least two important interpretive options, neither of which taken by itself proves wholly adequate to the total effect of Marvell's poetry on the reader. On the one hand we have Ruth Wallerstein's full and erudite summary of the philosophical, religious, and literary sources of Marvell's poetry in her *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic* (1950), an approach which, for all its needed and useful addition to the store of knowledge required by the modern reader to understand Marvell's allusions, failed, as Frank Kermode pointed out ("The Argument of Marvell's 'Garden,'" *ELC* [1952]), to take account of Marvell's poetic uses of these allusions. The other option, represented in part by Hyman's, Toliver's, and at present, Friedman's studies, involves taking this information into account only insofar as serves to elucidate critical readings of individual poems. In this respect, Marvell's learning appears, for his poetic purposes, to have filled a function little different from that of similar kinds of allusions in Donne's or Milton's early poetry; that is, it serves as a mine for metaphors and philosophical motifs. It is one of the achievements of Professor Colie's study that she has brought Marvell's allusiveness, his self-conscious exploitation of conventional themes and genres, out of the realm of the extended footnote, and placed it in a central position in his poetic art.

Her essential point is summed up in her study's subtitle. Marvell's is a "poetry of criticism" insofar as it is often aimed at a commentary on the very conventional materials which form its matter. Marvell's poetry is thus dedicated to commenting on and analyzing issues of human life through the instrumentality of implicitly commenting on the various poetic, philosophic, and religious conventions through which these issues have in the past been given expression. For her, Marvell's poetry and therefore his "criticism" is open-ended; it defines problems which point to the possible structures of the solutions without in fact giving them:

He was certainly much interested in particular themes, but not, I think, committed to any particular theme or obsessed by it. Indeed, the variety of the uses to which he subjects his themes . . . argues for his preoccupation rather with their problematics than with their conventional or single message" (p. 13).

As a result, Marvell's poetry is often characterized by ambiguity, indefiniteness, questioning, qualities which serve to define precisely the issue of a given poem's matter, its problematics in other words, and it is this definition in itself that is the poem's ultimate purpose. As Professor Colie says about "A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body," "the poem demonstrates the problematics it displays. From how it is made we learn what it says" (p. 29). In a wonderfully apt phrase, she calls Marvell a "pontifex of traditions" (p. 137), meaning that his poetry calls the reader to apprehend (as she says of "The Garden") the poem's "critical nature by its peculiar comment on its own, or the poetic, activity; that is, it comments on its own creation and its own meaning even as it undergoes that creation and establishes that meaning" (p. 151).

There is a sense, of course, in which all Renaissance poets filled the role of "pontifex of traditions," insofar as all were heir to some extent to the humanistic ideal of imitation. What sets Marvell apart, in Professor Colie's treatment, is the extent to which Marvell turned the doctrine of imitation to making poetry self-consciously construct its own meaning out of the deliberate act of imitation; by, that is, its own refinement of the human issues which conventional genres had traditionally embodied, in such a way that a Marvell poem renewed and laid bare the human experience which gave these genres their vitality in the very process of laying these genres themselves open to poised and cool analysis:

Some of Marvell's elusiveness lies in his peculiar perception into the meaning of poetic techniques: even as he uses a device, an image, a form, a figure, he appears to be analyzing it for his own purposes, and to incorporate into his poem his own thinking about its problems. Poetry so conceived is experimental, exploratory, discovering; . . . with the result that for a reader, the poem becomes an experience of what a poet does, how a poet works his materials to make something new of his traditions" (pp. 104-05).

The act of imitating and criticizing literature and the act of imitating and criticizing life are thus, for Marvell, the same.

So far Professor Colie's argument makes explicit an aspect of Marvell's poetry toward which much criticism has been evolving for some time. That Marvell's poetry is "metapoetic" is a synthetic insight that readers of it will recognize, although it has not been stated so surely nor developed so extensively before. What sets Professor Colie's study qualitatively beyond, not only recent studies of Marvell, but studies of the Renaissance lyric in general, is the methodological self-consciousness with which she matches Marvell's own tentativeness. As she admits in her candid Preface, this book was written for those "who believe not so much in sure methods of interpretation as in preparations for interpretation" (p. x), and this limitation the author abides by scrupulously throughout. This book is, in fact, not an interpretive study at all, in any of the accepted meanings of the word. It is, rather, a phenomenological description of what exactly appears on the page, with all the *lacunae*, abrupt transitions, unlocalized allusions, and open-endedness of Marvell's poetry left intact. The result of this description is not the poem-as-problem-to-be-solved, but rather the poem as statement of exactly why its particular matter should in fact be problematical. Professor Colie's approach to Marvell's poetry thus becomes analogous to the very approach the poetry itself makes to the conventional themes and forms it imitates. The

problems which she finds Marvell dealing with are well-known, and all of them are explicitly set forth in the poetry in antinomical form: the retired versus the active life, the flesh versus the spirit, the artifice of civilization versus the primitivism of rural simplicity. What engages the reader here, however, is the author's scrupulous refusal to go beyond the sanctions of the poetry's own data. Such a methodology thereby does not commit the critic in any way to "solving" antinomies in favor of one side or the other, precisely because the phenomenological approach elucidates the inexorable fact that Marvell does not do this himself. Obviously such an approach is going to result in a long book; here, one hundred twenty-four pages are devoted to "Upon Appleton House" alone. Despite some repetition, the virtues of such scrupulousness pay immediate dividends to the reader. As Husserl and Heidegger have shown at great length, simply to "see" straight on what is before one, and to isolate it for the purposes of thematicizing, are far from being functions of a naive and unsophisticated intelligence; and our experiences with teaching poetry to freshmen should disabuse us of such fond sentimentalism. On the contrary, as Professor Colie demonstrates rigorously and with carefully self-critical honesty on every page of this study, to see directly what Marvell's poetry does, without immediately interposing historical, philosophical, or religious categories as catalysts for making the lines blossom into some kind of "sense," is no mean task, and she succeeds at it admirably. For this reader, perhaps her most important single achievement in the discussion of a single poem, is her justification of the explicit and overt artificiality which characterizes "Upon Appleton House." This artificiality has put off many readers, including Professor Friedman. Merely to describe what the garden metamorphosed into a garrison, what the cattle in the meadow transformed into pimples on a face, what the house "sweating" with the greatness of its master, what even the notorious "Antipodes in shoes" do, all of these, for the reader's immediate apprehension, is likewise to exhibit artifice, illusion, multiple perspective as one of the main devices by which Marvell elucidates the ambiguities of making choices within the antinomic categories of action and contemplation, "artificiality" and "naturalness."

In this study, Professor Colie gives us a fusion of historical criticism and textual criticism that the present state of Renaissance literary studies has for some time been ripe for, without ever having achieved. What makes her success all the more remarkable is the ways in which she succeeds in going through all the motions of collecting extrinsic historical data—the standard, almost knee-jerk method of Renaissance studies for decades—while at the same time doing something essentially different. In fact, Rosemond Tuve's *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, which I mentioned earlier as a previous landmark in Renaissance studies, is a prime example of the strengths and weaknesses of the older method. The declared attempt in that work was to illuminate the poetic practice by the poetic theory of the time, and the result was just so much and no more of the practice illuminated as could be in such a way. Professor Colie has contributed to the on-going evolution of literary methods for studying Renaissance literature a new rigor and scrupulousness, and a new critical self-consciousness, in setting the problematics which the literature may raise legitimately for the student. If I have any quarrel with the results, it lies in her deliberate "bracketing" (to use Husserl's term) of any thematicizing in Marvell's poetry beyond that yielded by the mere fact of the inclusion of divergent traditional elements, a kind of critical

"puritanism" which slights, I think, the clear trajectories of her own arguments. Marvell was not content, as Professor Colie says he was, with leaving the problems defined in his poems to turn into their own point, to become only "problematical." What is problematical in being a human being, and in writing poetry about that state while being in it, are vehicles in Marvell's poetry carrying a still further tenor, namely, the ultimate inadequacy of antinomic categories as viable instruments for dealing with complex moral and political issues. Nevertheless, if one of the ideal goals of literary criticism is, as R. P. Blackmur once put it, the stage magician's cutting the lady in half without really doing so, that is, a tactful regard for a poem's integrity in the face of the critic's determination to wrench its meaning from it, then Professor Colie's study is a model of such tactful regard, and of the elucidation such tact can yield.

Professor Friedman's study, on the other hand, offers us no such advances and consequently no such excitement. It is perhaps unfair to compare *Marvell's Pastoral Art* with "*My Ecchoing Song*," since it stands firmly in the present mode of Renaissance studies and fulfills the requirements of that mode quite exemplarily, for the most part. But a comparison invariably brings to light the ultimate limitations of such a mode. Certainly, joining the search for external sources with intensive reading of the texts has in the past few decades brought Renaissance literary scholarship out of the dark ages of purely "history of ideas" exegesis. One has only to remember and compare the past ten or fifteen years of Milton, Spenser, or Jonson criticism (to name only the most notable examples) with the endless search for sources under the guise of explication which substituted for critical reading before and immediately after World War II, to realize that Professor Friedman's book represents no mean tradition in recent Renaissance scholarship. Nevertheless, as *Marvell's Pastoral Art* shows, the liaison between historical scholarship and the new criticism has always been an uneasy one, mainly because in general the urgency of Renaissance scholars' need to join them was not matched by an equally intense re-examination of the methodologies underlying the two approaches taken separately in the interest of establishing a new methodology for the two when joined together.

The opening chapter, when placed in juxtaposition with the following ones, exhibits this rift. It covers Renaissance conceptions of the pastoral genre, the golden age, the fall of man, the imperfections of the fallen universe, the Cambridge platonists, the conflict between flesh and spirit: all well-worn topics by this time. The next five chapters discuss most of the poetry of the 1681 edition, with references to external sources and close readings alternating, but never coming into anything more than an extrinsic relationship. The latter are often quite cogent in their own right, though the relevance of the pastoral convention to these readings is for the most part conspicuous by its tenuousness. But though often illuminating, the critical readings are also on occasion disconcerting in their tendentiousness and irrelevance. There is, for instance, the putative pun on the word "resolved" in "A Dialogue Between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure," where it means both "determined" and also "the musical process that brings concord out of dissonance" (p. 75). Again, Pleasure's tempting the Soul with musical "Aires" is described as "sinister," because "this most beautiful of all earthly delights is yet as *insubstantial* and deceptive as the others" (p. 78, my emphasis). Neither examples engage in their ambiguity a complex significance in the poem at large: dissonance is never an issue in the poem either literally or

figuratively; and "aires" as connoting "insubstantial pleasures" is far-fetched, lacks resonance, and smacks a little of the sophomore's unguided ingenuity. Friedman's discovery of a pun on the Mower's "Sithe," where he finds that Damon's "sighs are strong enough to cut down the grass" (p. 134) exhibits an equally tendentious ingenuity; while if Marvell did indeed intend that the reader perceive the "Plumes" of the bird-like, disembodied Soul as they "Wave" in "the various Light" of "The Garden" to be "a very refined symbol of the act of writing poetry" (p. 171), he must have likewise expected him to have a momentary vision of a jiggling, fluttering quill pen. On occasion, however, Professor Friedman's pun-hunting pays off, as in his analysis of the word "vainly" in "The Garden" (p. 150).

But one's uncertainty about the critic's own sureness in defining the limitations and imperatives of his critical method are continually aroused by occasional, apparently arbitrary assertions of direct references in Marvell's poetry to traditional doctrines and symbols. For instance, "It is my contention that the tree that shelters the winged soul in stanza VII [of "The Garden"] is the tree of *sapientia* (The Tree of Life)" (p. 169), warrant for which is an article by D. W. Robertson on medieval gardens. As Professor Colie has pointed out so extensively (and Frank Kermode before her), it is just this kind of one-for-one reading of Marvell's allusions that tend to flatten out their meaning. Another example of an undigested "history of ideas" reading occurs when he finds that the Resolved Soul's insistence that it may rise to Heaven not "by the degree / Of Knowledge, but Humility" represents "the extreme development away from the Thomistic faith in the power of human rationality and in the essential correspondence between human reason and the intelligible plan of God for the universe" (p. 81). Leaving aside the misconception here of the *Summa theologiae* as somehow grounded in moral hubris, I find that both assertions ignore the ways Marvell has distilled out of many figurative trees and out of many traditional debates between reason and faith the essential structures informing them all. The critic's practice here and on other similar occasions serves well the demands of neither historical criticism nor close reading.

On other issues my own disagreements are perhaps more subjective, save that they are founded on such readings, my own and others, of Marvell's poetry which opt for accommodating its complexity rather than flattening it out. Thus, Professor Friedman holds that "The Garden" records an unequivocal rejection of the active life and human love in the interest of pastoral withdrawal, thereby apparently ignoring the ways (often noted) in which Marvell manages equivocally to import these motifs back into the garden disguised as pastoral furniture. As regards the "Horatian Ode," he finds little division within the persona's attitudes and arguments, seeing it as a "celebration of Cromwell's accession to power, and a profoundly serious justification of that power" (p. 254). And by much of "Upon Appleton House" Professor Friedman is frankly puzzled, putting down its deliberate artificiality, in one instance, to the fact that "Marvell was more pleased with the cleverness of his metaphors than we are likely to be" (p. 219). It is perhaps surprising that such a long book (two hundred ninety-three pages) explicitly devoted to intensive and scrupulous analysis should in these cases end with rather constricting the poet's meanings than in opening them out for us. Certainly as regards "The Garden" and the "Horatian Ode," Professor Friedman is entitled to his day in court, following as he does such a multitude

of wrangling witnesses to these two poems' difficulties. What disturbs perhaps are not his conclusions but rather his seeming unwillingness to grasp, for instance, why the "fall" in "The Garden" might possibly have overtones of moral significance, or why Marvell's attitude toward Cromwell as expressed in the "Horatian Ode" might be heavily fraught with ambiguity, for the purposes of arriving at these conclusions. To take competing reasonings into account in order to go beyond them is literary criticism's substitute for demonstrable confutation in the sciences; but simple dismissal leaves one's position that much weaker in both disciplines. Such a statement as this about the "Horatian Ode," advanced without apparent awareness of counterbalancing claims, invites the reader not to argue but rather, like the critic himself, simply to ignore: "There is, finally, nothing in . . . 'An Horatian Ode' to indicate that the massive creation of Time and Man, the English state, has any more compelling claim against the judgment of Heaven than that of age" (p. 261), which does a great injustice to Marvell's intelligence and reduces him to the position of the most brainless Leveller.

One other point which disturbs one in Professor Friedman's study is his tendency in the first half to speak of "early" and "later" as regards these poems, while admitting later on that "few of Marvell's poems can be dated with even relative certainty" (p. 199). The latter statement is closer to the truth, but the reader is dismayed to discover that Professor Friedman's assertion that "Clorinda and Damon" and "A Dialogue between Thyrsis and Dorinda" are "earlier" than "A Dialogue Between The Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure" and "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body" (p. 49) has nothing behind it except inadvertence.

The number of useful insights into Marvell's poetry breaks no new ground; what is stimulating in *Marvell's Pastoral Art* is also what is familiar, and what is new is often oddly regressive. It should for the most part provide scholars and critics in search of competing interpretations still another source. In Professor Colie's study, on the other hand, Marvell criticism reaches a new level of sophistication. One ought not to go to it for specific interpretations, because it does something ultimately more important: it clears the ground for a fresh critical beginning, and sets Marvell's poetry anew before us in its pristine, paradisaic state.

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Rabelais: A Study in Comic Courage by Thomas M. Greene. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970. Pp. viii + 119. \$4.95.

Rabelais is not an easy author. The reader who manages to find his way through the forest of language and of literary, historical and topical allusion is then faced by the mountain of interpretation. Modern commentators concede that the forest was admirably blazed by scholars of Abel Lefranc's generation but consider that many of their interpretations leave much to be desired. Professor Greene's essay is an impressive demonstration of the new insights which may be gained by approaching Rabelais with the techniques of the comparatist

and, above all, with increased awareness of the possibilities of symbol and affective meaning.

A nineteen-page introduction about evenly divided between a sketch of the times and a general statement concerning Rabelais' works in which the author emphasizes angelic vs. demonic modalities is followed by chapters averaging eighteen pages for each of the five books, a three-page conclusion, a chronology and a list of books recommended for further reading. Greene takes as his theme Rabelais' invitation to a life of courage as expressed, notably, in Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel and the latter's resultant enthusiasm for studies, the fire-resistant properties of Pantagruelion, the bravery of the protagonists in the *Quart Livre*, and the concluding image of the *Cinquiesme Livre*.

Scholars tend to neglect *Pantagruel* in favor of *Gargantua* which it anticipates structurally and thematically. Greene, however, underscores the richness of its contrasting styles and the paradox of "the instinctive hero," Panurge, whose inventive pranks are characterized as an art form. The friendship between the giant and the latter is viewed as a measure of Rabelaisian optimism. The setting is aptly described as one involving multiple strange new worlds and the suggestion that Rabelais' use of the Utopian motif as an argument against optimism is laid to rest. Greene does not mention parody in connection with Gargantua's letter to his son although this was amply demonstrated by the reviewer in *BHR*, XXVIII (1966), 615-32. He evidently does not see anything incongruous in labeling Pantagruel as "the intellectual hero" or in ascribing "magisterial judgment, learning, and profundity" to his father in spite of the behavior of the two giants in the rest of this book.

According to Greene, wisdom shines through the coarseness of *Gargantua* which is a masterly fusion of serious and comic tendencies. He shows that Rabelais concerned himself mainly with the liberating effect of education which he presented less in the form of a curriculum than in "the *feel* of study." The polemical side of Thélème needs to be stressed, he says. An excellent discussion of the meaning of the term *civilité* as regards the celebrated abbey is an important feature of this study. The identification of Picrochole with Charles V and Lefranc's theory of Rabelais' agnosticism are refuted. In sixteenth-century French, *converser* means 'to frequent,' not 'to converse,' thus invalidating Greene's observation that *conversans en compaignies honnestes* "exemplifies the rediscovery of that intimate and informal art, good conversation."

Greene does not subscribe to the traditional view that the *Tiers Livre* is about the nature and status of women or the institution of marriage. It concerns rather the nature of truth and the nature of action. He is more generous than most critics in his appraisal of Panurge and suggests three possible levels of meaning for the latter's praise of debts. I believe a similar observation might very well apply to Eudémon's praise of Gargantua in I, 15.

The author rejects Lefranc's theory that the *Quart Livre* was influenced by Jacques Cartier's narrative (1545) of his second trip to Canada and is of the opinion that it was probably modeled after Lucian's preposterous voyage. He offers us some particularly incisive remarks on the theme of eating, comedy as therapy, and the significance of *médiocrité* in Rabelais. Greene does not generally base his interpretations on biographical or historical data; he does, however, devote considerable space to these matters in his treatment of the Fourth Book.

The arguments for and against attributing the *Cinquiesme Livre* to Rabelais are

given about equal space by Greene who concludes that the best chapters may reasonably be ascribed to him. His study of the *Isle Sonante* and *Dive Bouteille* episodes reinforces the Spitzerian view that the latter in particular may be considered to be among the most beautiful pieces of French prose ever composed. Greene's conclusion emphasizes Rabelais' capacity to question and the liberating aspect of his works.

Marcel Tetel's very useful book entitled *Rabelais in Twayne's World Authors Series* (New York, 1967) is a regrettable omission in the otherwise judicious selection of works for further reference.

The Landmarks in Literature series, which is being edited by Maynard Mack of Yale University, includes other studies of French works: *Madame Bovary* (by Paul de Man), *Montaigne's Essays: A Study* (by Donald Frame), *Phèdre* (by Jan Miel), *Reading the Song of Roland* (by Eugene Vance), and *Tartuffe* (by Jacques Guicharnaud). The volumes are presented in an attractive dust jacket designed by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden.

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Psychoanalysis and Literary Process ed. Frederick Crews. Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1970. Pp. viii + 296. \$7.95.

A great deal of water had to run under the bridge and over the dam before such a book as this could be written and published. Psychoanalytic criticism had to achieve a hard-won degree of academic "respectability" before a graduate seminar would be offered in that subject at a distinguished university (California at Berkeley), before that seminar would be conducted by a major professor, before that professor could write that his students "all brought a prior psychoanalytic interest to their work," that these students were "such as to make any teacher imagine that he had happened upon a magic educational formula," and that he could gather five applications of their chosen approach into a book to which he would write a brilliant introductory essay. And it is not the smallest evidence of the changes that time has wrought that each of these students should have attained, since they were gathered into that seminar in 1967, placement as assistant professors at Temple, UCLA, Rutgers, Buffalo, and Harvard, respectively.

No, it could not have happened twenty years ago. It was in 1950 that the first gathering of scholars was held, tentatively and with some difficulty, at an MLA meeting, to discuss the impact of psychoanalytic theory on literary criticism. From that rather timid gathering of 35 lonesome practitioners of a discredited and derided critical technique there evolved the journal (*Literature & Psychology*), of which the present writer had the honor to be a founder, publisher (at his own expense), and editor until 1967. From it there developed (after 1958) the regular Discussion Group on Literature and Psychology, as well as the phenomenally well-attended Forum at the MLA meeting of 1966. In that group were to be found most of the academic literary scholars whose works figure in Professor Crews' *Bibliographical Guide*. It is, I hope, not too boastful

to say that that group marked the Declaration of Independence of psychoanalytic criticism from, on the one hand, the *clinical* use of literary works and authors by psychologists and psychiatrists and, on the other hand, the meagerly informed—sometimes uninformed—dabbings in psychoanalytic speculations and half-baked conclusions by literary people who admitted, even boasted, of their incompetence in psychoanalytic theory.

It brings the present writer up short to realize that when that group was organized in 1950, Frederick Crews was barely of college age and none of his contributors were yet in their teens. So the first aim of this review is to welcome Professor Crews and his disciples, to rejoice that their seminar existed, to congratulate them on their putting together so expert and provocative a book. Let the record show that at least one of the old men of the tribe has the most kindly feelings for the young men who are destined to be chieftains in the clan.

But, having sung this paean in honor of an art that has come into its own and has fallen into competent and devoted hands, it is still appropriate to consider an older tribesman's assessment of the achievement of the younger warriors. Let us suppose that the essays that make up this book had been submitted to *Literature and Psychology* or, more recently, to *Hartford Studies in Literature*. Such a supposition is not too far-fetched, for at least two of the authors represented have indeed submitted papers (never one of those published here) for my editorial consideration.

Not Professor Crews, of course. We have corresponded from time to time, and he did me the courtesy of allowing me to read his contribution to *The Relations of Literary Study* while it was still in manuscript. I wanted to pre-publish it, so that our special group of readers might have an opportunity of making suggestions before its final appearance in the MLA collection, but his editor would not permit it. His psychoanalytic study of Hawthorne seemed to completely knock the props from under my own investigations on the same subject; only very recently have I come to realize that he has merely shortened my work, not eliminated it. If I have any reservations concerning his introduction to the present book, they concern its tone, not its content.

Probably because he has not had to face so much downright prejudice as we did, he has not adopted the rather conciliatory style that we found necessary. We would never have suggested, as he seems to do, that psychoanalytic criticism is the last word in critical approach. In this he seems to be misguided in casting out not only the vague literary maunderings which were spawned by the minor disciplines of the New Criticism, but also in discounting the validity of other forms of interdisciplinary criticism. It is good to see Northrop Frye cut down to size by one who seems able and willing to endure the sharp edge of Frye's redoubtable tongue, but it would dismay some of us even more to have to sustain the Crews' thesis that forms of criticism other than our own are "anaesthetic"—which seems to imply both that they are lacking in any feeling for beauty and also that they are *an*-aesthetic, lacking in all feeling. Isn't that going a bit too far, Mr. Crews? It almost suggests that the psychoanalytic critic has to compensate for something by being on the defensive, and that is about the last thing we ought to be.

As far as the substantive contributions of the five contributors' essays are concerned, I have little or no quarrel with them. Or rather, if I did have any quarrel, I consider that this review would be no place in which to express it.

I believe that if a psychoanalytic critic has an alternative interpretation to offer, he ought to write his own paper and present his own conclusions independently and not in the form of a review of the contributions of another psychoanalytic critic. The only difficulty that I find is that I am not always able to determine with any degree of accuracy exactly what the psychoanalytic position of the contributor is. This, it seems to me, is particularly true of the essay on *Moby-Dick*. Am I out of line in suggesting that the conclusions of the psychoanalytic critic ought to be expressed in the simplest and most direct terms? He will have enough to do to substantiate those conclusions with direct references to the text, to psychoanalytic theory, and to previous analyses of the same work. He ought not to be led astray by the modes of writing which were characteristic of certain formalist critics and of more recent phenomenological, structuralist, and existentialist critics, into believing that something may be gained by a thick, difficult, and unwieldy style. Of course Melville himself uses his prerogative as a creative writer to express himself indirectly, and with a characteristically hermetic style which requires and invites psychoanalytic interpretation. That is no reason for the interpretation, however, being couched in the style of Melville. Perhaps the fault lies with me, but I admit that after more than a quarter of a century of reading psychoanalytic criticism I would be hard put to it to write a précis setting forth exactly what Mr. Leverenz undertakes to demonstrate in his interpretation of *Moby-Dick*.

That brings me to another matter of strategy. The day when the psychoanalytic critic could get along with a copy of the work under consideration in one hand and a copy of Freud in the other is now past. The accumulated body of psychoanalytic critical material requires the scholarly critic even in this field to follow something like the old procedure of setting forth prior conclusions and giving text and footnote references to them before he proceeds to add his bit of additional interpretation. Let me be quite specific. Mr. Hutter's study of *Great Expectations* does contain footnote references to the study of that novel by Julian Moynahan, a good example of well-intentioned psychodynamic interpretation. The only other conceivable psychoanalytic critic who finds a place in his footnote is Steven Marcus (p. 46, n. 26), and here the reference is to Marcus's failure to realize that Freud was not only a rebel against nineteenth century prejudices but also a victim of some of them. I think that Mr. Hutter could have found a good deal of additional material on *Great Expectations*. I know that he missed at least one item specifically, and I see no reason why I should not mention that one: his discussion of the relationship of Estella and Miss Havisham and his interpretation of Miss Havisham on several dynamic levels would have profited by a reference to "Floras and Doras: The Women in Dickens' Novels" (*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Volume 7 [1965] Number 2, pp. 181-200, especially the discussion of *Great Expectations* at pp. 197-99). And I make this suggestion even though the author of that article is myself.

I have a similar fault to find with the *Moby-Dick* essay. There is a single footnote reference to the most influential Melville critic in the psychoanalytic field, Henry A. Murray. That footnote refers to a 1951 article in the *New England Quarterly* and makes a small point. I don't suppose a reference to Dr. Murray's introduction to *Pierre*, a classic in both Melville criticism and psychological interpretation was called for, but there is a remarkable omission in the

absence of Dr. Murray's "Dead to the World: The Passions of Herman Melville." To be sure, the collection in which that essay appeared (*Essays in Self-Destruction*, edited by Edwin S. Shneidman) was published only in 1967, the year in which the seminar was held, but that was three years before the Crews collection was published. I think that if Mr. Leverenz had done his homework he might even have found some way of getting access to the paper that was originally delivered by Dr. Murray as a special lecture sponsored by the University of Southern California and the Suicide Prevention Center in 1963.

Mr. Brivic's essay on Joyce's *Ulysses* might have furnished a model to Mr. Leverenz on how to write a clear piece of psychoanalytic interpretation on a work which is as full of complexity and ambiguity as Joyce's novel. Here I am in no position to comment on Mr. Brivic's use of the work of his predecessors. There is a rather impressive listing of previous psychoanalytic and semi-psychoanalytic interpretations in Note 14 on page 124. It might have been interesting if Mr. Brivic had found in *Literature & Psychology* not only Richard Wasson's study of Stephen Dedalus but an earlier contribution written by another and much younger Fenichel (Robert R. Fenichel, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Orphan," *Literature & Psychology*, IX, 2 [1959], 19-22).

My own previous reading does not suggest any prior studies comparable to Mr. Stein's very revealing analysis of Pater's *Renaissance*. The theme of homosexuality is well treated, even though at times it may seem somewhat labored and over-developed.

Mr. Schwartz opens his discussion of *Cymbeline* with the statement that this play "has evoked relatively little critical comment," and this is certainly true as far as psychoanalytic criticism is concerned. Norman Holland's account of the treatment of *Cymbeline* in *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* carries the investigation through 1963 and shows only portions of two essays which deal with *The Tempest* but have some relevance to *Cymbeline*, plus a comment by Robert Fliess. M. D. Faber in his 1970 anthology of psychoanalytic criticism of Shakespeare (*The Design Within*) reproduces the Abenheimer paper on *The Tempest* but adds nothing further on *Cymbeline*. Under the circumstances it is only natural that Mr. Schwartz should have devoted a rather lengthy and detailed analysis to this difficult play. Schwartz mentions an analysis by Charles K. Hoefling which appeared in 1965 in *Shakespeare Studies* but notes that Hoefling's essay is biographical whereas he, Schwartz, approaches his analysis through the play itself. Once again, I will make no effort to reproduce the gist of Mr. Schwartz's development. It seems to me eminently worthwhile even though at times a little difficult to follow, possibly a little too involved. On the whole, it would seem that Shakespearean criticism is genuinely enriched by the insights that Mr. Schwartz offers.

I have approached these essays, as I said at the outset, as an editor would approach a number of papers submitted for publication. Let me now say that every one of these papers would have been accepted for publication, although some of them might have been returned to be clarified and rewritten to some extent. I wish that this critical "letter" could have been specifically directed toward the several contributors, for much of what I have to say directly concerns them rather than the reader of this review. That reader may have some difficult going from time to time, and I wish he could have been spared that, but on the whole he will be greatly enlightened and stimulated by this book, both in

its introduction and its component essays. Let me congratulate Mr. Crews and his contributors and hope that all of them will continue to make many more contributions to the psychoanalytic study of literature and of specific literary works.

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The Expanded Voice: The Art of Thomas Traherne by Stanley Stewart. San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1970. Pp. ix + 235. \$7.50.

According to the dust jacket of *The Expanded Voice: The Art of Thomas Traherne*, Stanley Stewart's goal is "a thorough analysis of the major writings, both prose and poetry, of Thomas Traherne." In addition, we are told that he "offers a re-evaluation of Traherne's literary worth and makes a significant contribution to the criticism dealing with this seventeenth-century author." In the acknowledgments Professor Stewart especially emphasizes his debts to the work of Carol L. Marks and Joan Webber. The goals and the models are admirable; and, in light of Stewart's previous scholarly accomplishments, the reader has every reason to expect a book of high quality. Unfortunately, because of inaccuracies, ambiguities, and obscurities, the promise of the book is not realized.

Without even opening the book, a potential reader is confronted with a problem almost prophetic of the more serious ones awaiting him inside the book. The information supplied on the spine implies that *The Expanded Voice* is a book by Thomas Traherne; Stewart's name is nowhere in evidence. One can imagine the confusion which will result not only in the minds of booksellers and librarians but also in the minds of "those not yet familiar with Thomas Traherne"—a group of readers for which, according to the dust jacket, this book will be a "delightful discovery."

The first chapter rehearses the few facts known about Traherne's life and describes conditions at Oxford during the years Traherne was at that university. Unlike Gladys I. Wade, author of an earlier book on Traherne, Stewart quite correctly refuses to accept "as literal facts Traherne's own references and allusions in his *Centuries of Meditations* and in the two autobiographical cycles in his poems" (p. 6). But although this chapter and others bear evidence of extensive background research, all too often the solid contributions are vitiated by glaring inconsistencies and inaccuracies. For example, at the beginning of the first chapter Stewart surveys the scholarship on the problem of the identity of the parents of Traherne. The first biographical sketch of Traherne appeared in Anthony à Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691-92); but Stewart points out that in "the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1927, M. L. Dawson argued that Anthony à Wood, at whose account we shall look shortly, must have been mistaken in his biographical sketch" (p. 3). After outlining most of Dawson's objections, Stewart concludes, "Finally, the major attractiveness of Dawson's argument is that it seems to fit the facts of Traherne's success in later life, a success awarded in the seventeenth century to very few shoemakers' sons" (p. 4). Stewart subsequently quotes the relevant passage in Anthony à Wood's work, but the reader

is surprised to find that nowhere in the quotation is there a reference to Traherne's having been a shoemaker's son. Stewart has quoted the wrong edition of *Athenae Oxonienses*. In the first edition (1691-92), the sketch begins "THOMAS TRAHERNE a Herefordshire man born," but in the second edition (1721, "very much Corrected and Enlarged"), it begins "THOMAS TRAHERNE, a Shoemaker's Son of Hereford. . ."

In the second chapter Stewart examines the rhetoric of Traherne's *Roman Forgeries*. Having read widely in writers like John Jewel and Thomas James, he is able to place Traherne's critiques of early church documents in "a grand tradition of personal abuse" (p. 21). He emphasizes Traherne's concern for "textual purity" (p. 36) and praises his "intended scrupulousness as a scholar" (p. 44). "Compared with polemical treatises like it," he writes, "*Roman Forgeries* has a sharpness and precision of diction and syntax which is distinguished" (p. 44). These things being true, it is unfortunate that Traherne is so often misquoted in this part of Stewart's book. Although misquotations appear in other parts of the book, they are extraordinarily frequent in this chapter. In a chapter so concerned with stylistic matters, misquotations of the following kinds are particularly damaging: "Letters of the Fathers" (p. 17) for "Letters of Fathers"; "I will first show you in *your own Authors*, that you publish for good *Records*" (p. 17) for "I will first shew in *your own Authors*, that you publish such Instruments for good *Records*"; "upon preference of his Crimes" (p. 29) for "upon pretence of his Crimes"; "Confusion in the Kingdom" (p. 29) for "Confusion in Kingdom"; "before *Quadragesima*" (p. 32) for "before the *Quadragesima*"; "with 70 Canons" (p. 34) for "with the 70 Canons"; "upon *Nicene Council*" (p. 37) for "upon the *Nicene Council*"; "is sufficient hint" (p. 40) for "is a sufficient hint"; "*because the 65 and the last Canon*" (p. 41) for "*because by the 65. and the last Canon*"; and "Rank of the Church" (p. 42) for "Rank in the Church." Doubly ironic are these frustratingly ambiguous statements of Stewart: "All polemical writing holds a common admiration for clarity in syntax and diction. Implicitly, such a linguistic norm tends to value the formal, representational ideas of truth" (p. 29).

Most of the third chapter is devoted to an analysis of the philosophy of *Christian Ethicks*. Stewart compares Traherne's views with those of writers like Montaigne, Roger Coke, Thomas Hobbes, Henry Cornelius Agrippa, and Pierre Charron. In the second part of the chapter he considers the form of *Christian Ethicks*: "Structurally, the paragraphs, the sentences, and the chapters of the *Ethicks* do not develop logically" (p. 65). "Emerson claimed that consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds; it is also almost the sole defining characteristic of the true case paranoiac. We have heard of the piety of *Christian Ethicks* but not of its structural inconsistency. Yet both features help to define the speaker" (p. 69). "As the discussion develops from moment to moment its plan changes, so that inconsistency is one of the features added along with other unplanned material" (p. 70). The form may be therefore described as "open" (p. 70). In spite of the ingenuity of Stewart's argument, one is not convinced that the inconsistencies of *Christian Ethicks* are either intentional or valuable. In *Roman Forgeries* Traherne was extremely critical of such imperfections of form. For example, of a passage in Binius he writes: "How perplexed his discourse is, I suppose you see. His courage fails in the midst, and it becomes thereupon so rough and difficult, that it is scarce intelligible. The occasion of its Incoherence

is that Parenthesis (thrust into the middle)" (p. 165). Again, he writes that Binius himself knew another work to be a forgery "by the baseness of the Stile; *Consarcinatus est, It was patched up*. That is his word; a Metaphor implying, the Taylors were but Botchers that made it. Secondly, By the contradictions that are in it, he knew they were divers Authors, because they jangle, and cannot agree" (pp. 174-75). As for Emerson's remark, Stewart has left an important word ("foolish") out of his indirect quotation. Emerson actually wrote that a "foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. . . ." Is the maintenance of unity or coherence in a work of literature merely a "foolish consistency"?

Chapters IV and V are concerned with Traherne's *Meditations on the Six Days of the Creation*, "The Church's Year-Book," the *Thanksgivings*, and the *Centuries of Meditations*. In these chapters Stewart's focus is again on form: "As temporal progress diminishes in importance—and it certainly does in Traherne's work—the principle of organization changes radically. We find few examples of the rigorously defined meditation described by Martz: composition, analysis, colloquy; in Traherne's mature work the form tends to be 'open'" (p. 76). Chapters VI and VII are easily the best in the book. They are mainly concerned with detailed analyses and explications of some of Traherne's "finest" poems—especially "Shadows in the Water," "The Preparative," "The Circulation," the "Thoughts" poems, and "Goodnesse." Stewart argues that the poems in the Burney manuscript ("Divine Reflections") form a separate sequence, just as John Wallace had earlier "persuasively shown that the Dobell *Poems* form a separate sequence" (p. 156).

The least convincing chapter is the last ("Concluding Remarks"). Although one might quibble about some of the evaluative remarks Stewart makes about the prose works, his high praise for the Dobell poems and the poems of "Divine Reflections" seems widest of the mark. Here is the kernel (p. 211) of his poetics:

The two poetic sequences are intense and rich in their treatment of such themes, as fine as any poetry of its kind written in the period. The problem is that critics have too frequently limited good poetry to that which is precise in its imagery. Clearly this is not a meaningful critical principle but fashionable dogma—dogma, one might add, which would condemn, along with much of Traherne, many of the best passages from Yeats and Eliot as well. It is not difficult to imagine a universe of value in which a poetry of abstractions has found its place in the affections of discriminating readers. Such an audience would recognize the intensity of stanzas like this:

O Nectar! O Delicious Stream!
 O ravishing and only Pleasure! Where
 Shall such another Theme
 Inspire my Tongue with Joys, or pleas mine Ear!
 Abridgement of Delights!
 And Queen of Sights!
 O Mine of Rarities! O Kingdom Wide!
 O more! O Caus of all! O Glorious Bride!
 O God! O Bride of God! O King!
 O Soul and Crown of evry Thing!

To respond adequately to Stewart's contentions, one would need a great deal more space than that allotted this review. But even if one could agree that the prime value in literature is intensity (as Stewart implies numerous other places in the book), how is "intensity" to be defined? More specifically, just where in the quoted passage is the intensity? In the repetition of the word *O*? In the repetition of exclamation marks? The example is unconvincing, to say the least. Surely this is an attempt to replace a "fashionable dogma" with an unfashionable, vaguely developed one.

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Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence by James R. Hollis. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970. Pp. xii + 143. \$4.95.

In a recent essay on translation, Octavio Paz describes the way writers affect each other:

. . . one only needs to distance oneself a little to realize that we are listening to a concert where the musicians, with different instruments and without obeying a conductor or following a score, are composing a collective work in which improvisation is inseparable from translation and invention from imitation. Often one of the musicians breaks into an inspired solo; a little later the rest follow him, while introducing variations that render the original motif unrecognizable.¹

This picture of a jam session happily avoids the usual connotations of "influence," a term that suggests imitation and inferiority. The familiar theme of absurdity harmonizes many of the characteristics of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, so that it is difficult to discuss the latter without making him appear to be a Johnny-Come-Lately. For instance: both have learned (partly, one assumes, from Chekov) to orchestrate the bleats of their characters in such ways that we feel the weight of pauses, and we pay almost as much attention to silences as to words in their plays. Professor Hollis wisely deals with the matter of influence by ignoring it most of the time; he mentions Beckett now and again (17, 57, 112), then moves on with his explication of Pinter's text.

He divides his discussion into five chapters: "The Room as Metaphor," "The Poverty of Self," "The Struggle for Possession," "*The Homecoming*," and, inevitably, "The Rest Is Silence." With scholarly ingenuousness he provides, with each discussion, a summary of "the salient incidents of the play for those who have not seen or read it" (xi). He mentions silly allegorical interpretations only to refute them. Having used up much of his limited space in these two exercises, Hollis is able to bridle the inclination to over-explain; in fact, he is discreetly silent about many episodes that perplex Pinter's audiences. His argument may be summarized, at the cost of some subtlety, as follows: "The room

¹"The Literal and the Literary," *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 September 1970, p. 1021.

is suggestive of the encapsulated environment of modern man, but may also suggest something of his regressive aversion to the hostile world outside" (19). The characters who hide in the room are such etiolated creatures that they cannot tolerate silence, lest they hear their emptiness calling unto emptiness, so they noisily occupy themselves with the struggle for possession of things that are meaningless. Yet there are patterns in experience and, since patterns imply meanings, one would profess some faith in archetypes if he could discover the everyday consequences of such belief.

Criticism of Pinter will offer few surprises until it moves beyond this kind of thematic explication—which is what this book offers, the editor's claim that Hollis is a "technical critic" (ix) notwithstanding. Pinter is a difficult subject for criticism not only because his themes are familiar but because they imply severe restrictions on commentary. When a play is about meaninglessness, the critic is partly at cross purposes with its effects. Insofar as he provides his reader with confidence that the meaning of the action can be described, his whistling in the dark resembles that of the characters in the plays. How is one to deal with a playwright who says, "The curtain goes up on the stage and I see it as a very potent question: What is going to happen to these two people in the room? Is someone going to open the door and come in?" Is this the quintessence of banality or profound existentialism? Hollis, a sympathetic critic, adopts the second attitude toward Pinter, but he glosses the silence of a playwright reluctant to affix any meanings to his plays. Sensitive to the difficulties, Hollis does not belabor his reader; the book is short.

In *The Caretaker* (1960), Davies is an alien bird, here for a moment, but never at home. Like other dispossessed characters in post-Christian literature, he is on the journey of a life that no longer has a middle, let alone an end. When he comes upon the statue of Buddha that rests among the bric-a-brac collected by Aston, it means nothing. Like everything else inherited from the past, it is merely a caretaker's responsibility. In *The Homecoming* (1965), however, there appears to be a center whereby one can measure the journey. In this play Pinter seems to relax from his preoccupation with our inability to develop souls. He seems, however, to affirm the existence of some other kind of substantiality, for Ruth, according to Hollis, is a source that the men long to rejoin; a strange creature with several faces, she is by turns a mother, a wife, and a whore. Silence has new implications. Hollis argues that the family is moved by "chthonic forces" (103) toward Ruth, whom he describes ardently, to say the least, as "the natural end, the uroboros, the omphalos, the world navel and vortex of all beginnings" (106).

It is useful to note how religious affirmations could issue from absurdist premises, but Pinter dramatizes only what mysticism and existentialism have in common, which is a refusal to believe in the substantiality of the self. His dalliance with yea-saying is merely that. Hollis tailors his evaluation of Pinter's dramatic vision to what has been produced thus far when he decides that Pinter was wise to avoid "a fatal erring" into "something more than theater" (120). Despite his fondness for quasi-religious terminology in his own criticism, Hollis puts a rather high premium on scepticism: "As Pinter follows the direction of his vision, as he moves toward the OM, he runs the risk of replacing drama with apotheosis, of trading the stage for the temple" (113). We are to believe that it is better to be an uncommitted writer than a serene and possibly foolish mystic,

but many of the authors quoted on the subject of silence—Pascal, Hölderlin, Rilke—would scotch this aestheticism, this assumption that writing is an end in itself.

Pinter does not choose between the religious and absurdist explanations of the malaise defined in his plays. As Bates says in *The Silence* (1969), "If I changed my life, perhaps, and lived deliberately at night, and slept in the day. . . what exactly would I do? What can be meant by living in the dark?" (115). Few would condemn Pinter for not answering a question that most of us have not answered, but there is no need to agree with Hollis that Pinter's present idea of the theater—to use Francis Fergusson's phrase—is necessarily superior to the ritualistic dramaturgy that may follow it. So far he has composed "chamber music" for the concert of modern drama, but that is all we have come to hope for in the theater, and Pinter's reputation begins to outgrow his production. He is praised frequently for returning a sense of mystery to the stage, but that is a religious conception, and Pinter refuses to conceptualize. His mysteries more resemble muddles, which, as Mrs. Moore learns in *A Passage to India*, may be all there is—the hum of time sucking in all our words. If we cannot be religious, let us not pass off our muddles as mysteries.

The chief virtue of Hollis's study, then, is the way it sharpens one's sensitivity to Pinter's real talent, which is showing how banality usually represents a refusal to communicate, rather than a failure. We rattle on not because we are confident that our ideas are true but simply because we fear our own pauses. Judged by his appearances in Pinter's works, modern man is as insecure (so ill at ease is he in the world) as the hypothetical "folk" who are reputed to have believed during some dark and fear-ridden era that a mere sneeze could blow the ghost out of the machine.

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Modern American Poetry: Essays in Criticism ed. Jerome Mazzaro. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1970. Pp. xiv + 368. \$7.95.

Modern American Poetry: Essays in Criticism is a landmark for me in the history of American criticism. No other collection of critical essays shows so forcefully that a new critical spirit reigns in our land. This spirit, which contrasts sharply with that of American criticism between 1930 and 1950, is something profounder than a point of view or a critical technique. Mazzaro is accurate, I think, when he introduces his collection of essays with this claim for its variety:

The points of view span biographical, sociological, and aesthetical frames. The techniques range from new critical to psychoanalytic, from phenomenology to stylistic, from myth to impressionistic. As such, they represent a cross section of American criticism as different as one might need today to approach American poetry. (viii)

For all their diversity, however, these essays have something most important in common. They are inspired by a tendency toward critical autonomy, by a sense that criticism should be sufficient in and of itself.

As I understand it, this tendency toward the autonomy of criticism is not something doctrinal, whether explicit or implicit, in the writing of Mazzaro's critics. It is there to be understood, but only experientially, only in the actual experience of reading the essays. The clue to the nature of this criticism is that never once, in reading the collection, is one required or even urged to turn to his shelf and pick up a volume of poems by one of the subjects of the essays. One feels that the essays are meant to be complete in themselves, that they include within themselves all the poetry a reader needs for understanding what the critics are saying.

If one can throw himself back into the waning years of the New Criticism, in the early 1950's, he will recall that just the opposite was then the case. Most essays then being published were dull and lifeless and obscure if read for themselves. The life and light of such criticism depended upon one's reading the poems of its subjects right along with the criticism itself. The critics wrote as humbly dependent upon the poems of their concern. Indeed, one hardly thought of reading criticism then unless he were baffled by something in a poem and felt the need of assistance.

It might be thought that Mazzaro's critics are returning to something comparable to the greatness of the originators of the New Criticism, to a criticism like that of Eliot, Blackmur, R. P. Warren, Tate, Brooks, Empson, and Leavis. Especially the early essays of these critics were so brilliant that, as Robert Lowell has said, their publication was awaited with an anticipation comparable to that for a new poem by a major poet. And it is true that some of Mazzaro's critics, surely at least Jarrell on Whitman, Frye on Dickinson, J. Hillis Miller on Stevens, Kenner or Marianne Moore, and William Heyen on Snodgrass, have a brilliance and vitality in their manner and style that reminds one of the early Blackmur or Leavis. But there is a difference more important than this superficial resemblance.

Even though brilliant, Blackmur's best essays were always bafflingly obscure, if read for themselves. The secret to Blackmur's greatness as a critic, in fact, is that he demanded of his reader that he return to the poems of which he wrote and meditate upon them at length. If the reader did that, moving back and forth between Blackmur and the poems of his subject, then Blackmur's thought became clearer and profounder to the point where one knew vividly, in intimate relation to the poems, just how far he himself could go with Blackmur and where he must diverge.

The essays in Mazzaro's collection work in just the opposite way. Whether brilliant or not, they are all fairly clear in themselves. They are all of a summary nature, they lump the lot; they are of the whole of Whitman, the whole of Dickinson, the whole of Frost, the whole of Pound, the whole of Crane, and so forth. They are all based upon big pronouncements. When lines and poems of their subjects are quoted, it is not for the purpose of luring one into the depths of the poetry, but rather in order to illustrate the pronouncements made by the critics. Blackmur's quotations never work illustratively. They are presented in such a way that the thrust of behavior is felt within them, just as it is in actual poems. Thus, they appear as too rich and dense and complex ever to be used to clarify merely critical, discursive writing. Blackmur's criticism is meant to illuminate the poems. He never made the mistake of trying to clarify the clear by means of the obscure. But doing just that is characteristic of Mazzaro's critics. If, for example, in reading Mazzaro's own essay on Lowell or, say, Jan Gordon's

study of Frost, one disobeys his natural inclination and does turn from the critical text to read meditatively a whole poem by Lowell or Frost, then what had seemed quite clear in the essays becomes deeply obscure. Critical statements which are immediately clear become suddenly opaque when one permits their ostensible objects, actual poems rather than gutted lines used illustratively, to press against them.

Hugh Kenner, to cite another instance, carries out a superb exposition of his idea that Marianne Moore's poems are voiceless and wholly dependent upon the way they are arranged on the page. If, in reading his essay, one takes the poetic passages quoted as a mere illustration of his idea, as Kenner is asking him to do, if indeed one consider only the graphics of the poetry, then the essay is a clear delight. If, however, one turns to an actual poem and reads it seriously, hearing the supra-verbal thrust of behavior in its words, then it will be full of voice and its richness will depend on its voice at least as much as on its graphics. The quality of Marianne Moore's own recitations is obviously beside the point. Her own poetry, as Kenneth Burke has clearly shown, is as distinctly voiced as it is graphic, and it disrupts and trivializes Kenner's brilliant essay.

That the criticism in Mazzaro's collection is all but independent of the poetry which seems to be the object of its concern cannot, of course, be proved, because it is so thoroughly experiential an affair. Possibly the essays seemed autonomous because, like most reviewers of such a collection, I felt the need to read them hurriedly. Or possibly an acquaintance with much of the poetry about which the critics pretend to talk was the cause of my feeling no need to interrupt the criticism for an independent look at the poetry. To guard against such possibilities, however, I did thwart what seemed to be a natural tendency to treat the criticism as autonomous; but it was only to find that the poems I returned to were so distant from the criticism that they could properly be said to be unrelated to it. Furthermore, my reading of Mazzaro's collection was interrupted by a reading of Helen Vendler's recent book on Stevens; and that reading was hurried and without a return to any one of Stevens' poems. Nonetheless, I felt that in order to understand Vendler's book, in order to give it a fair reading, I would have to reread the poems which are discussed within it. Just this feeling, this need and desire to move from the criticism to the poetry, is what is absent from a reading of Mazzaro's collection of essays.

Of course, within the general tendency toward critical autonomy, there are wide variations. Sister Bernetta Quinn's rambling and quaint narrative journey along the Passaic, with pauses for musing over certain background material, is most remote from *Paterson* itself. Mazzaro's own learned effort to show that the material of Lowell's poetry comes from such sources as the *Action Française* and the writings of Eliot, Dawson, and de Ménéscie is utterly self-sufficient. Lowell's own style, his act of giving shape to the material, is almost wholly ignored. When one watches Lowell in action, the similarities seen by Mazzaro between Lowell and various antidemocratic and antisemitic writers are so remote as to be, if not invisible, then beside the point. Not, to be sure, that what Mazzaro says is false. It is simply independent of the poetry.

At the other extreme are George T. Wright's essay on Eliot, John Logan's on Cummings, and Joseph Riddel's on Hart Crane. Riddel, for example, discusses both "Lachrymae Christi" and "The Wine Menagerie" at some length. The rather narrow and assured readings he gives, however, depend not so much on

the poems, which are densely rich in their suggestiveness, as on Riddel's general theme, on his effort to lump the lot, to take in the whole of Crane under his "poetics of failure." Even so, in this case it can be said that a responsive reading of the poems will protect them from the critical reduction. Thus, at this extreme of Mazzaro's collection, there is a meaningful relation between the criticism and the poems.

Once the idea is squarely faced, it is fairly obvious that the tendency toward the autonomy of criticism in this volume is representative of its time. The unbridgeable gap between poems and criticism is a first premise in the thought of Northrop Frye; and his widespread influence among critics needs no demonstrating. No doubt everyone has been told by colleagues that they are writing books or essays clear and sufficient in themselves, studies that can be understood without previous training or even acquaintance with the poems they are supposed to be about. Undoubtedly others have toyed as I have with the idea of writing a critical study about a non-existent poet. My idea was to talk about the poetry and then, when it came time to quote, to leave a blank space with a note to the effect that the poet refused permission to quote. Here, I said to myself, would be the true poetry of silence! But now it is clear even to me that this big idea was not an original way of going beyond Borges. It was really a sign of the times, a mere drop in a forceful current, a minor variation on the prevailing fashion. It has been anticipated by multitudes. Almost everyone is writing about non-existent poets, even though the names of their subjects are spelled the same as the names of actual poets.

As a slow learner, I have only recently discovered what must have been common knowledge for some time, that nothing could be less original than the study of a non-existent poet. Several months ago, I was reading an essay by Thomas Vogler on the poetry of Lowell (unpublished, but truly existent and soon to be in print). The essay began, fashionably enough, with pages on the whole of Lowell. But, then, in a baffling way, Vogler began to discuss poem after poem from *Lord Weary's Castle* and this procedure evoked the uneasy feeling that the criticism was not very clear. With the sense that I was violating a habit, I then reread the essay with Lowell's volume at hand, reading poems before and after Vogler's discussion of them. And, lo, the words of the poems came alive and they moved like a body in a dance. This, I realized, was what was going on in Blackmur's and Leavis's criticism. It then became clear that not the body of Vogler's essay, but his introductory lumping of the lot was the aberration. The shock of discovering that Vogler actually loved those poems and was illuminating and enlivening them rather than using them to illustrate and enliven his own thought, as, say, Heidegger does with Hölderlin, this led me to realize that the true aberration is not Vogler, but *Modern American Poetry: Essays in Criticism* and the spirit of contemporary criticism which it so finely represents. It would not matter if a maverick like Leslie Fiedler wrote criticism under the belief that it is an independent art. What does matter is that, however brilliant his writing may be, Fiedler is being so thoroughly conventional in his advocacy and practice of criticism as autonomous.

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