

1969

Book Reviews

Criticism Editors

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism>

Recommended Citation

Editors, Criticism (1969) "Book Reviews," *Criticism*: Vol. 11: Iss. 4, Article 5.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism/vol11/iss4/5>

Book Reviews

The World of Pope's Satires: An Introduction to the Epistles and Imitations of Horace by Peter Dixon. London: Methuen, and New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968. Pp. xiv + 218. \$6.75.

Peter Dixon tells us that his study of Pope is based on his master's degree research at the University of London; they manage these things better in England, I'm afraid, for this is an accomplished and professional book, impressive both for the ease with which it marshals its considerable learning and for the intelligence and alert good sense that govern the enterprise throughout. Since I shall later be complaining about what is *not* made clear here about Pope as a satiric poet, I want my respect for the whole performance to be clear from the start.

What is best about *The World of Pope's Satires* is suggested by its title—it explores both clearly and subtly the climate of assumptions about literary manner, personal conduct and style, social differentiation, economic and political process, philosophical and religious attitudes, in which Pope wrote satire and about which the satires speak. Though Mr. Dixon's findings are not often very surprising one by one, he has taken virtually all the relevant contexts into account and handled them with real deftness, and he admirably distinguishes between what were conventional postures in the 1730's and what were Pope's own idiosyncracies and concerns. Few readers will fail to learn *something* here, and this is surely the best introduction to this aspect of Pope's work now available.

But Mr. Dixon, though often very nice in his treatment of individual passages, is less than wholly convincing in his critical formulations. He begins by urging the disadvantages of the familiar "*persona*" theory of Pope's satires; for the full-scale, sustained creation of a dramatic identity he would substitute the idea of Pope as "rhetor," the public speaker whose styles and roles change as the case proceeds. While I doubt that the best *persona*-critics ever thought otherwise, the metaphor indeed has led to a good deal of crude and empty talk, and Mr. Dixon does well to suspect it. But his own practice seems to me to reinstate the idea in another form. In his second chapter, for example, where discussion of the contemporary conversational style of "raillery" leads to interpretations of *To Fortescue* (Satire II i) and *To Bethel* (Satire II ii), he so stresses the poems' "predominantly sociable manner," the poet's "companionable and outgoing" nature, as virtually to ignore any elements in the speaking manner that vary from this norm—in effect, we have the *persona* (though not so called) of "a man so experienced in the arts of pleasing in conversation [that he] is no misanthropist, will never run satirically amuck" (p. 38).

Pope's identity in these "sociable" satires, that is, is fixed and secure; elsewhere, as in the *Epilogue to the Satires*, he may of course adopt a very different role, that of a man who "is bound to speak as he thinks, at the risk of being censured for 'rudeness and want of breeding'" (p. 100). But in Mr. Dixon's view that role too is essentially fixed in the poem, so that the "Friend" in the *Epilogue* has to be taken (wrongly, I think) as a clear and obvious villain because (oddly)

he praises and practices the very polite delicacy Pope himself observed—and was praised for—in the earlier satires. Mr. Dixon explains the inconsistency by suggesting that “the social and political scene” had changed between 1733 and 1738 (p. 102); no doubt, but the point might be clearer if it were admitted that both the earlier and later satires are complexly made of “polite” and “blunt” speech held in differing kinds of adjustment, rather than having some poems be polite and some blunt to suit a schematism that is imposed, however instructively, from outside the poems to make the book itself symmetrical. A similar over-reductiveness troubles the conclusion, where Mr. Dixon first argues that Pope was “a man of his time” in exalting moderation into “a guiding principle” to preserve the new age from the anarchy of the seventeenth century, and then argues (more interestingly) that Pope and others took “a barely concealed delight in some of the forces of disorder and irresponsibility that society is officially committed to bringing under control.” Both views are true, but they are true *together*, and this method of presentation looks more like indecision than a response to the full complexity of individual poetic moments.

By not quite escaping the implications of the *persona* theory he wants to disavow, Mr. Dixon can't wholly avoid making the worst assumption that theory fosters, that the satirist is best understood as a calculating impersonator, whose art bases itself on a radical insincerity. “By keeping his reader (and victim) in countenance, Horace is able to strike suddenly and woundingly under the reader's guard” (p. 40)—though the reference is to Horace, Pope's own “polite” satires are meant as well. One knows what this means, but the figure of the satirist as treacherous assassin, a blackguard in friend's clothing, is distasteful and inaccurate—the delicate, companionable raillery Mr. Dixon praised in the earlier satires turns out to have been only an ugly fraud, and the moments of strong, blunt moral assertion elsewhere begin to seem like trumped up theatrical bluster. Why is the “reader” also the “victim”? Mr. Dixon, like any good reader, is living proof that one is *not* taken in, entrapped by the manner, while the obvious victims, the fools and knaves in the public world, wouldn't and *couldn't* read the poem with any understanding of what Pope makes us understand so well.

Mr. Dixon might want to protest that he knows all this, as at some level he surely does. But I wish that a book so well designed in every other respect had been a little clearer and more sophisticated in its ways of stating and developing its idea of how the poems work.

THOMAS R. EDWARDS

Rutgers University

Syntax in English Poetry, 1870-1930 by William E. Baker. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967. Pp. ix + 197. \$4.75.

Syntax in English Poetry is an original and significant introduction to the operation of sentences in modern poetry. “Very few writers have discussed the syntax of poetry in detail,” the author correctly observes, and of the extensive studies of selected grammatical devices in poetry none “deals systematically and thoroughly with syntax in poetry as distinct from semantics

and mo
more in
readers
("regul
specific
importa
syntax,
of the
systema
future
Altho
written
undert
Syntax
New I
World
torians
and ge
quality
means.
this is
compa
writin
was in
a stea
centur
tradit
The
estab
he ha
studie
fewer
eviden
provi
samp
chara
for p
has s
Surel
the
the
Jubil
Bake
tiona
sequ
poem
min
awar
editi

and morphology." The book will help the general student read modern poetry more intelligently by enabling him to understand ways in which poems move readers syntactically. The syntactic components of style are clearly identified ("regular," "dislocated," "elaborated," and "fragmented") and applied in specific analysis. For the more specialized reader the first four chapters mark an important beginning in the historical and comparative study of modern poetic syntax, providing for the first time a comprehensive yet concrete discussion of the continuity from the Victorian to the present age. Above all, Baker's lucidly systematic method of analysis will not fail to encourage, clarify, and deepen future syntactical studies of poetry.

Although extensive accounts of the language of individual poets have been written, and the "new critics" have dissected numerous individual poems, Baker undertakes the synthesis arriving at the historical perspective that was needed. *Syntax in English Poetry* contrasts dramatically from such books as F. R. Leavis's *New Bearings in English Poetry* or David Daiches's *Poetry and the Modern World*, which like Baker's work treat the development of poetry from the Victorians to the twentieth century, but which are mainly ideological in content and general in method. Leavis writes that poetry "can communicate the actual quality of experience with a subtlety and precision unapproachable by any other means." But whereas his book offers almost no explanation of why and how this is true, Baker's demonstrates it in syntax concretely and historically. By comparison of samples of about 500 lines from each of thirty poets—fifteen writing around 1870 and fifteen writing around 1930—Baker indicates that there was indeed a broad shift in poetic syntax, but also and perhaps more significantly a steady development of poetic syntax from 1870 to 1930. The poets of this century were rebels, yes. But they were also exploiters of established Victorian traditions.

The book is notable, then. It might have been better had Baker more securely established his method, which is outlined in his first chapter. He tells us that he has studied a sample of 500 lines from each of the thirty poets. Computer studies of style suggest that 500 lines are of doubtfully reliable quantity. And fewer than five poems, his usual sample for each author, is dangerously thin evidence for generalizing. At least it is safe to say that the size of his sample provides no rigorous scientific certitude. Nor does his method of selecting the samples. For example, we are told that the selections "sample the author's characteristic style." Now, that is sometimes an exceedingly debatable matter, for poets' styles change, and poetic taste perpetually alters. Do the poems he has selected by Tennyson, for example, represent the "essential" Tennyson? Surely a passage from "The Holy Grail" or "Lucretius" would better typify the Tennyson of around 1870 (and before and after, for that matter) than do the "Charge of the Heavy Brigade," "Defense of Lucknow," and "On the Jubilee" (though "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" is better). Furthermore, Baker has excluded from his samples "all genres which impose a rigid, traditional structure on the poet—sonnets, ballads, sestinas." But Rossetti's sonnet sequence, *The House of Life*, is considered by many to be his most characteristic poem. Finally, a study of syntax should follow the definitive text. The determination of that text often becomes an intricate problem. Baker reveals his awareness of the issue in a "Note on the Texts," but his preference for "cheap editions" (though "from reputable presses") over variorum editions is rather

cavalier. Because of these reservations, strict judgment demands that we accept his conclusions only tentatively, until confirmed by further research.

The matter of sentence types Baker handles more convincingly than his samples. How he defines a "normal" sentence is, of course, crucial to the entirety of his effort to explain the type of syntactical deviations typical of the thirty authors and the two periods 1870 and 1930. He has defined a "regular" sentence as one possessing the subject-verb-complement order, his definition substantiated by reference to agreement among contemporary linguists, such as Bloomfield, Hill, Chomsky, and Fries. He conceives, furthermore, of three deviations from this norm—"dislocation," "elaboration," and "fragmentation"—where words are rearranged, added, or deleted. The scheme is clear enough, and the author follows it consistently.

The reader, however, must be wary of the qualifications made. For example, whereas some linguists consider "Yes," "What for?" and "Fire!" as types of sentences, Baker holds all exclamations and responses, "except for a plain 'Yes' or 'No' and the interjection, 'Alas,' as fragmentary" (while ignoring the expressions "O" or "Oh"). I make a point of this because Baker will argue that poetry broadly shifted, with important exceptions, from dislocated-elaborated to regular-fragmentary. The smallness of his samples and the arbitrariness of his definitions magnify the significance of what he includes or ignores under each sentence type.

In Chapter One, Baker frankly sets forth his assumptions, methods, and conclusions. The next three chapters present the demonstration. The main pattern or shift from 1870 to 1930 is presented in chapters two and three and in a "statistical" appendix. If the book had been devoted merely to the demonstration of this shift, it would have gained in proof, it would have lost qualitatively. Baker, recognizing his description of the shift as a "facile contrast between Victorian and modern," wisely devotes Chapter Four to exceptions—detailed comparisons of Hopkins and Yeats, and Browning and Eliot, revealing both continuity and change. The fifth chapter attempts to explain the cultural context underlying the syntactical changes, and the final chapter stresses again the relevance of syntactical analysis to the appreciation of individual poems.

In Chapter Two Victorian dislocation and elaboration, the two syntactic variations most often employed by the Victorians (except Tennyson), are described as becoming less popular during the sixty years between 1870 and 1930. But comparison to Cummings, the only twentieth century poet in the study who varies his sentence primarily by dislocation, stresses the importance of the *kinds* of dislocation. Although dislocation is the least type of sentence variation in the twentieth century (except in Cummings), the parenthetical interruption increased, as the inversion decreased (except by Browning). And in Cummings the dislocation often becomes indistinguishable from fragmentation.

The section on elaboration in Chapter Two is more reflective than the brief and obvious discussion of dislocation, for here, while indicating the transition from 1870-1930 in decrease of elaborated sentences, the author also lays a ground for a provocative case for continuity. He shows how in elaborated sentences dependent structures are generated by a series of nouns or noun phrases, statements developing as radii from noun kernels, the noun and its subordinate elements tending to become autonomous. In examples from Tennyson and Swinburne, he suggests how, through the noun kernels and "semantic overlapping" of repetition, elaborated structures fade into fragments.

And
coho
or k
depe
tion

One of
fragmen
pattern,
and 193
syntacti
poets li
standar
at least.

Chap
of the
Yet ag
century
and rep
speech
existing
into a
grating
distan
conne
passag
new w
and th
be wil

Cha
two t
accen
in wh
Yeats,
impos
the gr
of dis
the m
sion o
these
gram
fused
of th
vague
"vari
mann
be de
Hopk
is de

And while a conventional sentence, without sacrificing grammatical coherence, can be elaborated by means of the repetition of key nouns or key concepts, a noun, acting independently, may originate a pattern depending almost solely on these semantic rather than grammatical relations. Thus the noun is the irreducible, primary element of fragments.

One of the surprising discoveries of the book is Tennyson's heavy reliance on fragments, though "he does not often weld a series of fragments into a larger pattern," as does Pound. Again, then, there is no sharp break between 1870 and 1930. The poets of Pound's generation have only "exaggerated certain syntactic idiosyncracies already partially developed. The originality of the later poets lies in their attempt to make these idiosyncracies into not variant but standard structures." Pound's dislike of Tennyson has no syntactic foundation, at least.

Chapter Three, "A New Manner," examines the new "standard" structures of the fragment and regular sentence orders (except for Yeats and Robinson). Yet again, this new idiom emerged from distinct tendencies in the nineteenth century. Yeats and Frost are the outstanding cases of the tendency to simplify and regularize sentences to make them conform to the patterns of everyday speech (*pace* Cummings). And the fragment developed from a variety of already existing structures which tended to unhinge grammatical connection and develop into a kind of fragmentation—catalogues, "fused" structures, the "disintegrating" sentence, and the "absolute" construction. There is not so great a distance from Whitman and Browning to Pound and Crane. But for all the connections from 1870 to 1930, the poetry of Pound, in which long and whole passages are held together by means of key nouns, constitutes for the reader a new way of reading poetry: "He must grasp the principle of allowing nouns and the extensive substructures they generate to replace sentences, and he must be willing to experiment with unorthodox ways of relating these blocks of nouns."

Chapter Four, "The Strange and the Familiar," examines two nineteenth and two twentieth-century poets (Hopkins and Yeats, Browning and Eliot). Baker accentuates Hopkins's radical syntactical wrenching and its consequent ambiguity, in which he is "more than a mere forerunner of later experimentation," while Yeats, also known as a difficult and obscure poet, "makes statements almost impossible to misconstrue, though they may be difficult to understand," through the great uniformity of his syntax, which he varies primarily by the earlier modes of dislocation and elaboration. A comparison of Browning and Eliot reveals the modernity of Browning. The structure of Eliot's sentences is "an extension of, rather than a departure from, certain of Browning's techniques" (though these extensions give Eliot a uniqueness of his own, particularly the decreased grammatical and typographical signals and the increased hovering elements and fused structures, which give his early style a radical dissociation). The arguments of this chapter are provocative, but may not be entirely reliable. There is a vagueness with which the author shows how Yeats and Eliot "modified" the "variations" of Hopkins and Browning. That Yeats illustrates "how Victorian mannerisms were curbed and modulated to strengthen . . . regularity" might be demonstrated, but not by the meager evidence adduced here. Comparison of Hopkins and Yeats is practically non-existent. Of eleven pages only one paragraph is devoted to the exploration of Yeats's regular verse form, and that merely

iterates the earlier assertion that Yeats's style is "in part modeled on normal patterns of English speech." Nor does Baker offer sufficient support for his claim that Eliot's sentences are extensions of Browning's. It is hardly adequate to argue that both poets have similar purposes. In fact, Baker's own statements would suggest that Eliot is different from Browning, since Browning works within the framework of a single sentence and traditional grammar, while Eliot does not, and since Browning writes predominantly elaborated and dislocated fragments, while Eliot writes primarily fused structures and brief sentences.

Chapter Five swerves into a fresh but logical direction. Why did modern poetry occur? Why did free discrete fragments, extremely radical dislocation, and the plain patterns of everyday speech "become of use to poets"? The patterns of common speech Baker traces fundamentally to "the apotheosis of the common man" during the period from the French Revolution to the Russian Revolution, when the common man achieved suffrage, educational prerogatives, and moral authority. These democratic extensions, combined with the popular press and the immense technological advances of the power of speech—telephone, phonograph, etc.—brought about a revolution in style. Needless to say, this is all highly speculative, and the argument is obscured by the indistinctness of "common speech" as it applies to Pound, Eliot, Cummings, *et al.*, in the whole of their poetry. And although it accounts somewhat for the poetry of Frost or Sandburg, and parts of other modern poets, it does not explain the manifest difficulty and obscurity of modern poetry. That obscurity is better explained, however, in the following section on fragments, where Baker suggests that in twentieth-century verse there is an extension of the "oral realism" of the dramatic monologue into the "psychic realism" of interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness. This tendency he traces, in conventional fashion and derived from secondary sources, to the influence of Freudian and Bergsonian notions of psychic reality, especially the belief that reality is entirely relative to individual viewpoints, the direct experience of sense experience, emotion, and subconscious. Syntactically this means the reliance upon fused structures, disintegrating sentences, fragments, and the concrete image or *noun*. To Bergson the very essence of life is "multiplicité confuse," or images (nouns) syntactically unconnected. To Freud the very nature of dreams is their lack of grammatical coherence—displacement and condensation also best transcribed by nouns. "Thus, juxtaposition of images, usually fragments, has perhaps more than any other single stylistic trait earned for modern poetry its reputation for obscurity." The subject far exceeds the capacity of such a pastiche.

The arguments sound plausible: most of them are familiar. But the "conscious revolt" so strongly asserted is never proven. His belief that poets absorbed general tones and general principles of style from the French lacks substantiation and relevant connection to his subject. And his brief survey of the historical background of the development of regularity and fragmentation (Crane the newspaperman, Pound the fascist, Sandburg the colloquial master) possesses all the certitude of instant history.

This derivative chapter is followed by an original application of all the preceding material to the evaluation of specific poems. Baker's dictum: "Syntax, like rhyme, cannot be neutral. It must impose a pattern that either detracts from or enhances poetic merit." How does a poem work successfully or unsuccessfully? Hardy and Levertov purposefully combine stanzas of syntactic fragments with

stanzas of complete grammatical structure; Auden cleverly accommodates syntax to artistic purpose. Unfortunately, the discussion is too brief to be either fully clear or forcefully convincing. And the chapter is anti-climactic; Baker has made his case, if he has made it, by the end of Chapter Four.

The book has the strengths and weaknesses of audacity—to describe in less than two-hundred pages the shift of poetic syntax from 1870 to 1930 and its manifold causes! But Baker is fully aware “that subtler degrees of distinction exist, that more exact techniques for the analysis of syntax have been developed.” He argues rightly that by analogy, “gross anatomy properly precedes the study of the fine structure of cells.” Here is the main value of Baker’s book: it provides both methodology and demonstration as guides to subtler and more detailed analysis. Baker does not attempt to describe precisely the syntax of individual poems or authors, but “attempts to chart major shifts in structural patterns common to many poets”—the shift during 1870-1930 when “many major poets of the 1920s chose regular or fragmentary structures, whereas notable poets sixty years earlier often preferred dislocation and elaboration as variations of the normal pattern.” Although the author generalizes on too little evidence, and may give erroneous impressions of a writer by the minuteness of his evidence, I would not have wished for another book of similar length and purpose.

J. R. BENNETT

University of Arkansas

The Surrealist Revolution in France by Herbert S. Gershman. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969. Pp. xii + 255. \$8.50.

The Surrealist Revolution in France is a chapbook summary of surrealist ideas and a recapitulation of surrealist events. It is neither an exploration of theory (political, social, esthetic) nor an exegesis of art (the plates of the paintings are wretched). Professor Gershman, who has in fact compiled *A Bibliography of the Surrealist Revolution in France*, surreally devotes two-fifths of the present text, over one-hundred pages, to chronology and notes, the last of which, the five-hundred and eleventh in this lovingly madcap performance, cites the author and source of “And death shall have no dominion.” Most of the time, however, the notes are more tactful and, like a dossier, more useful. Professor Gershman’s text is pleasantly unpretentious and, like any honorable bibliographer who has read everything in his field, he recommends the best books: Marcel Jean, for example, on surrealist painting or Ferdinand Alquié on surrealist philosophy. Gershman also has kind words for J. H. Matthews and not unkind ones for Maurice Nadeau, whose *History of Surrealism* is still the best introduction.

Professor Gershman includes a reproduction of Max Ernst’s *The Virgin Spanking the Infant Jesus Before Three Onlookers* and quotes Dali’s rueful observation that “if you innocently dreamed of a Madonna by Raphael, without manifestly blasphemous intention, you were forbidden to mention it.” I should like to dilate upon the surrealists’ renowned irreligiosity because it may be argued that in their blasphemy they were trying to rehabilitate the values of a religious age. As Fra Angelico would have said that he was creating a Virgin, not a repre-

sentation of her, so the surrealists, in the face of abstract painting, insisted that the value of art has nothing to do with formalist criteria but with social, political, magical, and millennial ends. Before the Renaissance it was always and everywhere supposed that art should function in the human universe, subject to human use—not exist solely for esthetic pleasure. The giraffes in the drawings of Rhodesian neoliths are broken-necked in homeopathic ritual. The foot of the statue of St. Peter in Rome is eroded by the devotional kiss. How many figures of Satan were literally de-faced by medieval men living their faith? The opposite of these acts of holy vandalism and sacred desecration is the humidified museum, the air-conditioned nightmare for men interested in a living art.

The museum, as M. Malraux reminds us, is a post-Renaissance invention, and if, as it has been argued, art is the opiate of the middle classes, then clearly the museum is Mr. Big, artists are pushers, and the rest of us are junkies. Melville said it was as difficult for an artist to give up his genius as it was for a consumptive to give up his tuberculosis. Down with the museums cried the surrealists (like the Futurists and Dadaists before them), they are the symbols of our addiction. That is why Marcel Duchamp's challenge to the collecting mania is so compelling. Use a Rembrandt as an ironing board. Suspend a geometry book from a balcony. In this wry context, reassert the disposability of art. All man-made objects are works of art, argued Duchamp, from which it easily follows that all men are artists. Thus Duchamp, the painter who stopped painting, demonstrates not only that art is disposable but that artists are too, and perhaps his legendary refusal is paradoxically his greatest work. For that small portion of the modern public conversant with the history and evolution of Western art, painting easily finds a place on the walls of the mind. But when we look for the Duchamp, we find an unexpected blank, a work of purely negative character, typically esoteric, ultimately reductionist, from which all libido-energy has been withdrawn, whose very existence depends upon the sensibility of the spectator. Duchamp's work is ideally suited to the museum without walls.

The surrealists were trying to obliterate the distinction between art and life, but of course there was no chance they could succeed. If one contemplates the anonymous folk art of Brillo boxes and Campbell Soup cans, there is only one artist who comes to mind. Every art-object is made by a man who wears a mask of identity, and to see through the mask means to create through a convention; and though some conventions prove more fruitful than others, none is more inherently objective in its treatment of reality than another, though some may seem more life-like, others more art-like. A bottle by Chardin rendered in dimensional space is no less dependent upon convention than a bottle by Picasso analyzed into planes or a bottle (suitably filled with kerosene) hurled in a Guerilla Theatre. Everything depends upon the quality of the stylization, from Duchamp's passive refusal to Breton's proclamation: "The simplest surrealist act would be to go into the street, revolver in hand, and fire at random into the crowd." Everything depends upon the quality of the stylization, even if the stylization is purely internal.

So the surrealists apotheosized play, the game, and of course Duchamp became a chess master after he quit painting. Professor Gershman doesn't follow the progress of play in surrealist theory, but surely one of its more recent manifestations is the Yippies, who would also revolutionize politics. And play is particularly significant in certain forms of avant-garde dance as once in the days of Abstract

Expre
One
the m
pre-s
Anto
play

Sta
a

A Co

S

Pro
editic
obscu
the n
those
rece
infor
Eng
giver
com
resul
poet
the a
so, b

Ye
of s
assur
(wh
of c
men
A
trao
idea
a m
liter
This
grap
con
to l
betw
did
the
OE
or

Expressionism it was important in painting. But after a while even play palls. One can do only so many *cadavres exquis*, and then as Giacometti's sculpture of the mid-thirties has it, *No More Play*. There are harlequins who know better in pre-surrealists like Hawthorne, Cézanne, and Picasso, and in a post-surrealist like Antonioni: those lurching surreal phantoms of forced gaiety in *Blow-Up* who play at play, knowing there shall be no more play.

MARTIN POFS

*State University of New York
at Buffalo*

A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats by A. Norman Jeffares.
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968. Pp. xxxiv + 563. \$15.00.

Professor Jeffares' new guide to Yeats's poems, which is keyed to the standard edition, does not claim to be original or definitive. Much remains uncertain and obscure, the editor remarks, and he is never reticent about his material debt to the many introductory studies and commentaries published so far, in particular those of Henn, Ellman, Saul, Unterecker. His selection from the Yeatsiana of recent years is ruthlessly orthodox, those studies being preferred which provide information on source-material and further biographical detail, e.g. Stallworthy, Engelberg, Torchiana. The more speculatively inclined type of critic is rarely given a chance. Indeed, Jeffares himself in his preface proposes to avoid 'critical comment and judgement.' His own factual contributions appear to be the happy result of a friendship with the late Mrs. Yeats who granted him access to the poet's library. With the assistance of poet and TCD-scholar Brendan Kennelly, the editor has compiled a volume which will be carefully studied, and rewardingly so, by many students of Yeats.

Yet a book of this kind necessarily raises two questions, firstly, as to which kind of student the editor and his publishers seem to have in mind; and secondly, assuming that Jeffares wished to present the objective facts concerning Yeats, and (what this implies) that there is no arguing about facts, does the self-effacing type of criticism practiced by Jeffares really provide us with unchallengeable fundamentals?

As to the first point. Throughout Jeffares' commentary one can observe traces of what appears to have been an unresolved clash between the editor's idea of the student, whom he supposes to have a scholarly disposition as well as a moderately high IQ-rating, and the publishers' assessment of the reality of literary studies: a campus composed of largely illiterate students of literature. This hybrid recipient of information about Yeats is expected to pursue bibliographical references without difficulty; thus apart from being encouraged to consult the Variorum edition and the Parrish / Painter Concordance, he is supposed to know how to obtain the 'Dublin Magazine' for further information on links between Yeats and Blake, and not to be at a loss if required to look up 'Thucydides I, VI' for a gloss on the phrase 'golden grasshoppers and bees.' Yet, on the other hand, this student is not assumed to be capable of wielding either the OED, or a gazetteer, or a classical dictionary, or the Irish equivalent of the DNB. or Hone's standard biography of the poet. Turf means peat, and a crane is a

heron; Cephisus is a river in Attica, and the Sack a large square bag of wool, etc. The cottages next to Yeats's tower were rethatched in 1919, and during his visit to Algeciras, the poet stayed at the Hotel Reina Cristina. In short, far too much space in this book is cluttered up with references of a basic nature, and one wonders whether this spoon-fed illiterate, the student Jeffares and his publishers appear to have had in mind, would know what to make of an 'Irvingite,' or 'quattrocento,' or a 'Whig,' terms which are not explained.

As to the second point. Obviously the student will benefit from the literary parallels suggested by Jeffares, as well as from the inclusion of manuscript versions, the originals of Yeats's imitations, and the excerpts from his esoteric reading. Yet again I feel that the fact tends to obscure the artefact when confronted with the copious extracts drawn from the poet's prose-works. In many cases this *does* throw light on the meaning of a particular poem. What the student will *not* realize in being handed everything on a plate, is that Yeats's essays, for instance, are in their entirety frequently works of art, and not merely note-books for the poet's stray comments on the ostensibly primary artefact of the poem.

Jeffares in a way has attempted to extend the scope of the concordance of Yeats's works beyond the area covered by the Parrish / Painter computer. However, is it the critic's job to link passages on the basis of lexicographical resemblance? Or must he not also discriminate, even at this basic level? The computer failed to distinguish between 'And bid me stray with many a *tear*' and 'Nor *tear* the foemen from their steeds,' listing these under the same heading. Jeffares' method can yield similar non-results: 'a Bedouin's horsehair roof' (Ego Dominus Tuus), and 'Like some poor Arab tribesman and his tent' (Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931) is linked with an extract from the Autobiographies because it is phrased in a similar fashion. The context in which these lines occur invalidates any worthwhile utilization of the collated factual material.

Does Yeats's anecdote—and Jeffares devotes more than a page of close print to the quoting of it—involving his wife, her white hen, and the neighbour's collie-dog, throw any light whatsoever on the line 'Drown all the dogs, said the fierce young woman'? *Factually* it merely corroborates the persuasion we all share that a poet's art is somehow linked with his experience, yet what actually is gained by looking from the bridge at Stratford, as Caroline Spurgeon would have us do? Will watching the eddies forming behind the piers really help us to gain insight into some of the images employed by Shakespeare? I am a Coleridgean in believing that the relationship between reality and the poetically interpreted world is a very mediate one indeed. Jeffares' forebearance in the name of the factual sometimes almost tends to eclipse it. Under one rubric a string of references to 'gyre' is listed which will undoubtedly be of assistance to the student. In the absence of any comment, however, by merely letting the card-index open, as it were, under 'gyre,' the impression is given that Yeats adhered dogmatically to the tenets of his private philosophy of history. In my opinion it would have been imperative at this point to refer to the fact that Yeats's idea of contradictory but interpenetrating currents of historical development was qualified by the poet himself who resorted on occasion to the philosophically distinct conception of a dialectical topsy-turvydom. ('An age is the reversal of an age').

Jeffares' supposition, and it is one shared by many eminent critics, is that Yeats was possessed at times of a photographic memory for phrases, which he retained subconsciously until they could be of use. The business of locating the origins of 'terrible beauty,' 'Juno's peacock,' etc., is a highly entertaining one and

fills the columns of the TLS-correspondence section. But this kind of factual evidence will only be conclusive on that day of days when a gigantic computer will have collated the totality of all literary phrases and images past and present. In its absence the question of what is factual with regard to a poem remains arguable. What indeed is *more* factual: the fact that Yeats may have, or did indeed read a phrase or see a picture on his Road to Byzantium, and that this may be regarded as an objectively verifiable (and therefore demythologized) quantity in the poet's process of poetic production—, or is it factual to look at a phrase or image in a given poem and to find out how a literary parallel known or unknown to Yeats may help to elucidate that passage? A typical example is the 'out of cavern' voice in 'The Gyres.' As the MS versions refer to the 'old cavern man,' Jeffares states that '... this suggests that Yeats was remembering Shelley's Ahasuerus.' Quotations from the Autobiographies and the Vision follow, as well as other references which appear to bear this out. Yet a more relevant parallel, in my opinion, which helps to elucidate the *finished* artefact, is supplied by the lines from Keats's 'Endymion,' Bk. II, where the hero is encouraged by a voice from a deep cavern to aspire to a fully self-realized humanity by seeking and accepting absolutely contradictory experiences. In short, the editor's objectivity is defined by his methodological training. Derivation is the fact, not family likeness. Whilst bearing in mind the many positive qualities attributable to this book, I find I must resist yet another attempt to pass off this type of criticism as the only academically disciplined kind, a claim implicit on every page.

R. H. LASS

University of Warwick

Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays edited by Robert P. Creed. A Brown University Bicentennial Publication. Providence: Brown University Press, 1967. Pp. xii + 332. \$10.00.

In a reference ahead to his own contribution to this book, Stanley B. Greenfield calls the volume "New Approaches to Old English Literature" (*ELH*, XXXIV [June 1967], 141, n. 3). If indeed that was the working title for the collection, the editor has shown discretion in altering it. For however interesting and well-argued the essays—and most of them are both—most show no innovation in their approach to Old English poetry. In the same article Greenfield notes that the two ways in which scholars have most commonly viewed Old English poetry in recent years are the allegorical view, "with its concern for relating the semantic concepts of specific texts to patterns in Christian thought," and the oral-formulaic view, which finds the poetry composed largely of whole-verse formulas. And essays dealing with the Christian concerns or the formulaic nature of Old English poetry are at the heart of this collection.

Thus Louis H. Leiter, in an essay entitled "*The Dream of the Rood: Patterns of Transformation*," traces in some detail the three parallel dramas of Christ's Passion, the Cross's subjection, destruction, and subsequent exaltation, and the Dreamer's sleeping stained with sin but waking to new joy and hope. In "*The Conception of the Old English Phoenix*," J. E. Cross argues that the poem is

not just a translation of Lactantius with an appended Christian interpretation but has been thoroughly Christianized throughout. And Larry D. Benson, altering the title "The Christian Colouring of *Beowulf*" used by F. A. Blackburn many years ago, in "The Pagan Coloring of *Beowulf*" asserts that "Christianity is part of the very fabric of *Beowulf*; the pagan elements are not" (206-7). In an argument which seems to me certain to evoke opposition, he attributes inclusion of the pagan elements to interest in and sympathy for their pagan Germanic brothers awakened in seventh- and eighth-century Englishmen by communications from English missionaries among the continental tribes. He ends by speculating, ". . . it may be that we owe the survival of the poem to its touches of paganism, for the only manuscript in which it survives was written at that other moment in English history, around the year 1000, when English churchmen were again concerned with the fate of their heathen kinsmen in northern Europe" (209).

Formulaic analysis appears most prominently in Paul Beekman Taylor's "Themes of Death in *Beowulf*," for the "themes" spoken of are "formulaic repetition[s] of incidents and descriptive passages" (249). The overriding interest in formulaic analysis is shown also by the fact that Robert P. Creed adds to a ten-page essay on "The Art of the Singer: Three Old English Tellings of the Offering of Isaac" a ten-page appendix identifying the formulas appearing in the relevant lines of *Genesis A* and by the fact that most of the writers, whatever their subjects, find occasion to refer to this sort of analysis and to its starting point in the pioneering essay by F. P. Magoun, Jr. ("Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," *Speculum*, XXVIII [1953], 446-67).

Now both of these are of course perfectly legitimate ways of viewing the poetry, and neither vein has been completely mined; but there is nothing new about either. And here and elsewhere one begins to hear murmurs of discontent at the great dominance of these approaches in recent scholarship. Thus, in his article in *ELH* noted above, Greenfield points out that these approaches militate against "close attention to the text and texture of the poem immediately to hand" (141-2). In a graceful and witty rejoinder, entitled "Jottings on *Beowulf* and the Aesthetic Approach," to Magoun's division of *Beowulf* into two poems and a transition, Adrien Bonjour protests that "we might read on end most of the numerous interesting and valuable *Beowulf* articles written by Magoun and his followers without being aware that what they deal with is poetry" (191). And in an essay on "Image and Meaning in the Elegies," Edward B. Irving, Jr., speaking of formulaic analysis and study of the relationship between the poetry and medieval Christian forms and thought, warns, ". . . there is a certain danger inherent in the method of some of these recent studies. Piling up formulas, themes, and *topoi* in the abundant quantities apparently needed to persuade our colleagues can smother the poems under the guise of explaining them, especially in cases where our attention is constantly being forced outward to what a given poem has in common with other works, often much inferior poems or second-rate homilies" (153). Although Bonjour makes only the modest request that poetry be treated as poetry, Greenfield and Irving clearly call for a reading and interpretation of Old English poetry like that which, under the name of "new criticism," has been given other poetry for over thirty years. Now Magoun, commenting on the formulaic variants *bran-rāde*, *swan-rāde*, and *segl-rāde*, has implicitly denied the validity of such analysis, saying, "The singers are presumably concerned not primarily with some refinement of imagery produced by varying the first elements *bran*, *segl*, and *swan*—something for which an oral singer could

scarcely have time—but with recalling a formula expressing the fundamental idea in question with availability for different alliterative situations. It is hard to believe that they had much concern with possible connotative effects produced by passing mention of sails, swans, or whales" (*Speculum*, XXVIII, 452). But by ignoring this lesson of the master, Greenfield (in "Grendel's Approach to Heorot: Syntax and Poetry") and Irving produce the two freshest and most interesting essays in this volume. They make it clear that close analysis of the diction and imagery of Old English poetry can be enlightening, and this represents a relatively new approach ready for exploitation.

Another essay to be noted in the volume is Alain Renoir's "The Self-Deception of Temptation: Boethian Psychology in *Genesis B*," partly because toward the end Renoir says, ". . . my purpose has been to analyze the poem from the point of view of my own time; if Old English poetry cannot be appreciated from the point of view of our own time, teachers of English literature ought to abandon it with all dispatch and turn it over to the linguists and antiquarians" (65). Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., contributes an essay on "The Sutton Hoo Harp Replica and Old English Musical Verse," in which he summarizes what is known of music and musical instruments in Anglo-Saxon England and describes the effects he has succeeded in achieving on a replica of the small harp reconstructed from fragments found at Sutton Hoo. John Nist writes on "Metrical Uses of the Harp in *Beowulf*"; but the essay is really on the metrical structure of Old English verse, and it consists largely of presentation of a theory as if it were fact, without argument. R. E. Kaske, in "The *Eotenas* in *Beowulf*," strives to banish the Jutes from the poem. And Burton Raffel, in "On Translating *Beowulf*," distinguishes a poet's way of going about translating the poem from a scholar-critic's.

One more major essay, Neil D. Isaacs' "The Convention of Personification in *Beowulf*," deserves comment. Starting from a definition of *poetic convention* as "a compact, an agreement, between poet and audience to use and understand certain things in certain ways," Isaacs asserts, ". . . we must first set about analyzing the style produced by [the Old English poetic] conventions if we are to recognize individuality when it appears" (215). *Personification* is here defined more broadly than is usual, as the practice of speaking of "any person or animal or object or concept (hereafter called 'inanimate') . . . in terms of another person or animal or inanimate" (216). In the detailed study that follows, Isaacs demonstrates that personification, so defined, is an important element in the style of *Beowulf*, although some of his individual examples fail to convince this reader. A clear, though hardly crucial, example is his assertion that use of the verb *dugan* in connection with Hrunting helps to personify the sword, because the verb "is consistently used in *Beowulf* for persons, except for three other cases in which it is involved in personifications" (221). According to Klaeber's glossary, the verb occurs just nine times, five with persons, four with "things," including *ellen* and *witt*; thus the consistency of its use with persons in *Beowulf* is not very strong. But Isaacs has defined an obviously important convention in the poem, yet to be traced in other works of the period so far as I know, and thereby perhaps started a new approach to Old English poetry.

Although only traces of new approaches appear in this volume, it is a collection of mostly substantial and significant contributions to the understanding of Old English poetry.

RUPERT E. PALMER, JR.