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Book Reviews

The New Romantics: a Reappraisal of the New Criticism by Richard Foster.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962. Pp. 238. \$5.75.

Mr. Foster's book has the handicap of coming along late. Surveys of the so-called New Criticism have been numerous enough for him to have to work hard and self-consciously to make room for his own. Further, this is a small manuscript to do a big job, although the publisher's ingenuity has spread it out to cover 210 pages. And it often seems somewhat episodic, with its most important episodes having already appeared in literary journals. The book opens and closes with general, rather all-inclusive investigations. In between there are spiritual biographies of "pilgrims," four New Critics arbitrarily selected in accordance with Mr. Foster's purposes and treated so independently of one another that these chapters do not seem intimately enough related either to each other or to the other central discussions. Despite the superficial transitions, the chapters seem too autonomous and the entire undertaking not enough a single, cumulative, sustained effort.

Still Mr. Foster does try to make a new and significant claim. It cannot be the claim indicated by his title and argued for too frequently and with too much effort in the text: that the New Criticism is essentially a romantic movement rather than the classical revival it often pretended to be. We hardly need this late "reappraisal" to persuade us of what has by now become a commonplace in the history of modern criticism. The reader familiar with recent commentary on this criticism may be impatient with further refutations of claims that the New Criticism is "aestheticistic" or is "classicistic," or with Mr. Foster's own characterization of these claims as "generally held defining assumptions about the nature of the New Criticism." Similarly, his extended examination of Ransom to equate his "texture" with feelings and thus to show the romantic nature of his "structure-texture" dichotomy tells us what we should have already learned from several sources. Thus wherever, after a chapter of painful argument (even as late as the self-satisfied summary on page 207), Mr. Foster triumphantly concludes that a critic or an attitude has after all been proved "romantic," we may rightly feel he has been laboring the obvious.

But there *is* a unique intention at work here. Mr. Foster means to prove not the romantic character of the theoretical framework and the sources of the New Critics so much as the romantic "sensibility" (a word that is unhappily—and evasively—overused in this volume) or temperament or motive that underlies their thought. He graciously and flatteringly credits the adequacy of my own work and its providing his "point of departure." Borrowing Ransom's "structure-texture" dichotomy, Mr. Foster suggests that his own work, with a primary interest in the "texture" of New Critical pronouncements, is a "complement" to my explorations of theoretical "structure" in *The New Apologists for Poetry*.

I wish I could be as gracious in accepting his complementary contribution—and perhaps it is my self-interested, defensive attitude toward "structure" in New Critical thought that prevents me. For Mr. Foster's concern with sub-logical and extra-logical strategies, conscious and unconscious, and with meta-

phorical innuendo, usually ends with his refusal to take argument seriously—that is, philosophically—as argument. His concern with the poetry and rhetoric of the New Criticism too easily converts into his conception of the New Criticism as poetry and rhetoric only. And “poetry” in his phrase “Criticism as Poetry” cannot but carry along the quasi-positivistic implication that, however moving—or, in more technical language, “emotive”—this criticism need not be taken with philosophic seriousness in relation to the theoretical claims it intends to make. Here, especially in the big and exciting eighth chapter but elsewhere in the book too, is the core of his original but unhumanistic attempt to save humanism despite itself and its retrograde tendencies. Here is a brilliant *tour de force* that approaches the New Criticism in a new way, a way that is importantly related to recent fashions in academic philosophy which have not been thus applied to the wayward paths of literary theory. Its consequences upon the future possibilities of critical theory seem to me so menacing that I must bypass other matters to focus upon this issue.

Like the current philosophical school of semantic analysis in its celebration of “ordinary language,” Mr. Foster undertakes to reveal the underground mystical pseudo-theology of the New Critics. He examines their rhetoric and their tropes to see through their theoretical claims either to emotively charged “hidden persuaders” or to irrational, self-deceptive rhapsodizing of no philosophic significance. The method and its findings are unique. While systematic probing has by now persuaded the student of modern criticism to accept these critics at least in part as romantics, he will not expect to see them borne on the wings of their sometimes casual metaphors to “a whole religion of poetry, complete with worshippers, images and holy objects, and a corps of spiritual fathers” (p. 180). Only it is a little disappointing to find this ambitious argument supported by such desperate devices as Mr. Foster’s attempt to extend their use of the word “approach” (which of course apparently means no more than critical method) to mean “approach as supplicative ritual.” We begin to suspect the neutrality of this flashy performance and to worry about Mr. Foster’s own “hidden persuaders.”

What is this reductionistic semantic analysis to accomplish? If Mr. Foster means to prove that the New Critics do not use the language of common-sense philosophy, who would dispute it? But if he is assuming—as he often seems to be—that philosophy must be reducible to the “ordinary language” variety or it is not responsible philosophy but only rhetorical and poetic froth that masks its mere fervor with claims to truth, then clearly he has disqualified himself, *a priori*, as one who can help us through theoretical mists based on the denial of such simplicity. For he has begun by reducing them out of theoretical existence. All he can (and does) do is select his metaphors for analysis at his convenience, discover image clusters among them, take their vehicles literally, and then cast the rationalist’s skepticism upon the absurd lengths he sees these critics as having gone to in their “texture.” But how thoroughly can one proceed with “texture” while disregarding “structure”? The metaphors are taken out of their logical context, studied independently and played with freely, at times recklessly, since Mr. Foster allows neither logical context nor other, different, and less usable metaphors to qualify his rather spectacular, if sometimes fantastic, findings. Nor can the logic of the discourse pose a problem to him since he has, on methodological grounds, precluded this criticism from being anything but poetry. So

he conducts his "textural" analysis upon it in open defiance of the express intention of the discourse he is operating upon. It is one thing, and immensely helpful in a complementary way, to examine the texture of this criticism rather than its structure. But it is another, and too facile, to examine the texture in order to deny out of hand that there is a structure to be taken with philosophic seriousness. And it is hardly fair or respectful to several decades of serious critical endeavor which, whatever its value, was seriously intended by men who thought they understood what sort of discipline they were practicing, however messily the complexity of their problems forced them to practice it.

I do not mean to deny that Mr. Foster's charges may after all be correct in that these critics may be as misleading and as deluded as he says. Surely he is right to consider them. I am only denying that he can claim to prove his case with presuppositions that assume it as proved, that he can prove it by begging it. I could lodge this complaint at many points. Here let me mention only his discussion of "the mystical rhetoric of negation" (pp. 165-68). Proceeding on nothing but the apparently indisputable authority of C. W. Morris, Mr. Foster sees discourse as either translating ideas into "ordinary language" or resorting to the "language of true mysticism." But if he begins by assuming that all critical problems of whatever depth can be readily translated into ordinary language, and if he defines legitimate philosophical problems in accordance with such translatability, then he has not proved very much when he concludes that an approach to criticism that denies this translation is necessarily mystical. The circularity allowed by the *a priori* reduction has removed the problem for him. He supplies many quotations by New Critics in which they stress what poetic discourse is *not* and he concludes that these constitute evidence of mysticism. And mysticism, we should all know, is integrally related to romanticism. So there we are: he has got them into the cage again, and that's enough. Of course, we are also entitled to ask about what proportion of their writings are expressed in negatives, whether they make positive assertions (as they surely do). More important, we must ask whether their conception of poetry as being more than its prose paraphrase does not demand that they clearly tell their reader in what ways it must *not* be confused with what he normally thinks of as discourse. In which case the many negatives are understandable, indeed indispensable. And Mr. Foster's task has just begun, not as he thinks ended, Morris or no Morris.

His own rhetoric is always on the prowl, ever ready, as in the case of "approach," to use the language of religion to describe these critics in action. When Blackmur, having mentioned the unfortunate consequences of indulging in "critical insularity," acknowledges he has done so himself, our author is at hand to characterize this acknowledgment as "self-recognition, confession, repentance" (p. 96). Or at least it is "a little like" them. But how little? That is the issue here and elsewhere.

In his second chapter he uses the device of assembling fourteen brief quotations from mixed romantic and recent writers to prove how alike they are. Again they are out of the context of their respective systems; again there is no attempt to probe beneath the surface similarities. But since we have been aware of romantic elements in New Critics, surely it is more important—if more difficult—to point out differences in these two romanticisms, differences perhaps caused in part by the modern's desire to join a classical interest to their romanticism. A writer with Mr. Foster's semantic awareness should know better than to freeze

as shifty a term as "romanticism" into a monolithic entity, an omnibus all may enter on displaying the slightest credentials. Yet once he gets them in, he seems to feel he has done enough. Thus it is that he can ignore the changes in Shelleyan romanticism wrought by the new Critic's notion of poetic context or of language as medium; that he can see "revelation" ("knowledge" of a higher kind than that of reason and science"—p. 32) as the end of poetry for romantic and New Critic alike, ignoring the fact that for the New Critic, but not for the romantic, poetic knowledge is rather more concrete, more immediate—indeed lower—in its opposition to the abstract and transcendent; that he joins the New Critics to the romantics also in claiming the close relation of poetry and philosophy ("approaching the same high-level or ultra-real Reality from opposite directions"—p. 153), ignoring the fact that the New Critics' opposition to abstraction—unlike the romantic's attraction to it—makes him rather classify philosophy with science among the forms of prose discourse, the enemies of poetry. All these distinctions he can ignore because, in his defense of "ordinary language" philosophy, he cares only to lump similarities within a single romanticism whose textural mystique of poetry blurs for him such nice structural distinctions into a single irrationalism of extraordinary language.¹

In his final chapter Mr. Foster makes a startling, if generous, retreat. Having tried to beat this criticism into poetry, he is anxious to accept, even embrace, it as such so long as he can deny it any more pretentious philosophical status. And when he leaves his analyst's bias, he leaves it for sheer recklessness. For of all critics, it is Blackmur, the greatest offender of ordinary language in the earlier chapters and thus the most mystical of all, that he now finds most rewarding—perhaps on the reasoning that if criticism be no more than poetry, then the more poetic and less rationally responsible the better. It is a strangely self-renouncing conclusion after the harsh, even condescending, tone of what has gone before.

Mr. Foster has thus written a very puzzling book, an often scornful "reappraisal" that ends by being an impassioned, if strangely grounded, defense of the New Criticism. It seems finally to be an attempt to kill the New Criticism with its kindness. His subjects would probably have preferred less romantic ardor at the end and more intellectual respect elsewhere. Too anxious to join them with the romantics, he presses the textural awareneses, for which we are seriously in his debt, beyond the conclusions they have earned for him. Swept along by his talents, Mr. Foster has not often enough distrusted them and worried about all he may have overlooked, has not often enough been his own devil's disciple to curb his enthusiasm. Consequently, a book which is in places sound and in places new is too rarely both at once.

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¹ There is also evidence of more specific carelessness. For example, Mr. Foster attributes an erroneous title to an important essay by Elder Olson (pp. 232, 236); he causes some chronological confusion (pp. 145, 226) by citing only the recent (1955) paperback reprint of Brooks' *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947) and by suggesting (along with dual authorship) the year 1949 as the original publication date (in *Theory of Literature*) of a 1942 essay by Wellek; and three times he strangely refers to Eliseo Vivas as a "follower" of the New Critics (pp. 37, 43, 65) even though much of Vivas' influential and pioneering work on the "aesthetic experience," on emotion, and on subjectivism was produced in the 1930's.

The Intellectual Hero. Studies in the French Novel, 1880-1955 by Victor Brombert. Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1961. Pp. 255. \$5.00.

"The emergence of a new type of hero is the subject of my book. Its purpose is to define an intellectual climate and cast light on literary trends that are of specific relevance to the intellectual climate of our times" (p. 7). To achieve this end, Victor Brombert has chosen to examine certain novels which appeared in France over a seventy-five year period between 1880 and 1955. During those years the French novel led a lively existence and it has elicited a goodly number of studies. Mr. Brombert, like R. M. Alberès and P. H. Simon before him, is concerned with one aspect of the novel, its marked preoccupation with ideas, its predilection for what he has called "the intellectual hero." This type of hero is in many ways peculiar to our time and Mr. Brombert traces his emergence and his significance in relation to social and intellectual trends in France. This is no easy matter, given the particularly rapid and complex social, economic and historical evolution of France during these years, to say nothing of the proliferation of the novel itself.

Using his wide background of knowledge both of the social scene and of the novel, Mr. Brombert sets the stage, in brisk and well-documented general chapters, for the detailed analysis of specific novels selected in view of their relevancy within this context. The method has great advantages: facts and fiction, clearly differentiated yet linked, both gain in the process. Mr. Brombert does not dramatize, confuse or overemphasize. He is at home in both history and literature.

Yet the method is not without its dangers. Mr. Brombert follows one trend in the French novel, a dominant one to be sure, determined by his initial definition of the "intellectual": the novel of the French left, inheritor of the "mystique" of the French revolution. Only at the end of the volume is a passing mention made of the existence of another, opposed type of "intellectual hero." Even within this main trend, Mr. Brombert, perforce, makes his own selection perhaps according to his own literary tastes. Whatever one may think of the novels of Georges Duhamel or Jules Romains among others, it is perhaps a little dangerous to omit completely from a study such as this the "intellectual heroes" which they portrayed. Nonetheless, Mr. Brombert's method is vigorous and refreshing, his documentation sound; and he also does us the immense service of placing the existentialist novel in a reasonable and yet highly interesting perspective.

His book is divided into two parts, somewhat differently treated, the first being also the more original, the more vigorous of the two. After an introductory, lively and valuable summary of the history of the word "intellectual" itself as it emerged in France during the Dreyfus case, Mr. Brombert first traces the emergence of the "intellectual hero" in fiction moving "From Pathos to Stature." The five chapters, with one exception, deal with pre-World War I novels, those of Vallès, Bourget, Zola and France; Martin du Gard's *Jean Barois* and, more recent, Jean Guilloux's *Le Sang Noir*. The "intellectual heroes" in the novels selected are vividly presented and new. The choice of *Jean Barois* is particularly pertinent in this section, which is quite properly focussed upon the Dreyfus case, central in the intellectual history of pre-1914 France.

It was an altogether excellent idea to include in the book Louis Guilloux's

little-known *Le Sang Noir* but its inclusion in Part I is rather disconcerting. The book, published in 1935, is definitely post-war, and its hero belongs to another era, the era that produced Céline's *Journey to the end of the Night*. Between the Dreyfus case and the "Tragic impasse" of the thirties from which emerged the Malraux type of hero, lies World War I. It too caused an intellectual crisis of some magnitude reflected in such immediately post-World War I debates as the famous "crise de l'intelligence" discussion in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Perhaps because he felt this had been sufficiently dealt with, Mr. Brombert does not analyze this crisis with anything like the precision and authority he brings to his discussion of the nature of the Dreyfus case and its impact on the novelists' conception of their "intellectual heroes." Between Part I and Part II one senses a gap and Guilloux's *Cripure* would have been more at home in an intermediary section. Part I really encompasses the years between 1880-1914; Part II, "The Tragic Impasse," moves directly to the midcentury years between 1930 and 1950.

In Part II Mr. Brombert proceeds somewhat differently, preferring to deal in general with many works, focussing his analysis on authors—Malraux and Sartre—rather than on any one selected work. Here he seems more interested in dealing with the point of view of the writers rather than with the personalities of the fictional heroes themselves. Here too one would have welcomed additional data: a more detailed study of the effect of the philosophies of history upon the imagination of the novelist as he creates his heroes and their dilemmas, and even more essential, an analysis of the impact on the intellectuals of the defeat of France in 1940, with its consequences in the following years. This crisis was certainly as shattering as the Dreyfus case and its repercussions upon the "intellectual hero" in fiction as marked. Yet it is hardly mentioned.

But this again is a minor reservation. Mr. Brombert's book is solid, brilliant, unusually well-written and lays the ground-work for many other studies which it suggests. He attempted, he said, to "strike a balance between the critical and historic methods" and unquestionably he has succeeded in his critical approach. There is not a trace of the hagiography which has marred so many books on the existentialist writers nor has he thought it necessary to adopt any kind of jargon. Mr. Brombert knows Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy far too well not to see that the basic conflict in the "intellectual hero," the conflict between thought and action, although peculiarly acute and widespread in our time, has a long past. He handles fiction as fiction with a straightforward perceptiveness and objectivity which are thoroughly pleasing.

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Some Graver Subject: an Essay on Paradise Lost by J. B. Broadbent. London: Chatto & Windus, 1960. Pp. 304. 30s. (New York: Barnes & Noble, \$6.00.)

The long first chapter of this book is divided into three parts: (1) "The Demand for Divine Epic," (2) "Milton's Epic Motives," (3) "Decay of the Heroic and Divine." In the first part, of which much of the material is not new, Mr. Broadbent undertakes to explain why, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, English readers, as a result of the Reformation, "wanted some original

expression of Christian myth in its Protestant version." "Important literature," he writes, "had so far been secular, even pagan," a statement which does less than justice to Tasso, Du Bartas, and Spenser, especially the last, since we are told that "the serious purpose of fashioning a gentleman with moral virtues, for instance, was better served by Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman* than *Arcadia* or the *Faerie Queene*." "Milton's Epic Motives" consists of speculations, many of them no doubt valid, on the mental and spiritual experiences through which Milton had to pass before he was fully prepared to compose his divine epic poem. Many Miltonists, however, will be startled at the suggestion that the elder John Milton "had a 'castrative' effect" upon his son. They may well object that what Mr. Broadbent has to say about Milton's first marriage goes quite beyond what we are warranted in concluding from the facts as they are known. And they may ask: could *Paradise Lost* ever have been the poem that it is if the misfortunes of the years, 1649-54, had crushed his idealism? In this second section of the chapter one first notices Mr. Broadbent's proneness to find erotic and sexual implications, and to interpret in the light of Freudo-Jungian psychology. The third section is summarized in its concluding sentence: "The fulfilment came 'an age too late' to be plenary; yet its inadequacies are not merely regrettable failures of technique, but symptoms—often concealed by technical splendour—of distortions that occurred within Milton himself, between him and his environment, and in the Christian tradition."

The remainder of the book, chapters on Hell, Pandemonium and Chaos, Heaven, The World, Paradise, Antecedentia, The War in Heaven, Creation, The Fall, Exile, Conclusion, is a commentary the object of which is to prove that "the Miltonic 'ideal' is not unified: reader after reader testifies to a split, chasm, dichotomy in the poem between ethic and aesthetic, process and sentiment." It evidently matters not that very discerning readers have long been arriving at exactly the opposite conclusion. Readers of *Paradise Lost* need to understand that if ever an artist knew what he was doing and why he was doing it, that artist was Milton.

The most valuable, though they are not major, parts of the commentary are those dealing with Milton's use of the principles of classical rhetoric; and Mr. Broadbent would have rendered a real service if he had treated them more fully and systematically, as he is obviously competent to do. Much less valuable is the treatment of the agents of the poem. Eve fares better than Adam, he better than Satan, of whom only an unclear image emerges, although Milton's characterization of him is one of the most brilliantly successful in all literature.

In the commentary there is not infrequent praise of Milton's artistry, but since the main concern is to point out his failures, or what the author believes to be such, the praise is usually followed by an adversative statement which partly or wholly negates the praise, as in the following typical examples: "The angels, as we meet them in the poem, are satisfactory. Aesthetically they are superior to most. . . . They are admirably adapted to social intercourse with men. Theologically it is good that they should so obviously be creatures, not gods. But so far as they represent the potentialities of human nature . . . they are inadequate." Were they, being angels, ever intended to represent those potentialities?

Some Graver Subject is difficult reading. Mr. Broadbent is too fond of unusual words—not always known even to *O. E. D.*—such as diseconomy, syncrete, absci-

titious, presuppositional, planetomachia. Too often he lapses into such unintelligibility as the following: "Satan is not floating in a souly shallop through mental chaos to a psychological landfall, but navigating an actual district of the poem's firmly-delineated cosmos towards the reader's living universe, and taking with him the physical presence, the ally-making generalship and the mundane associations that belonged to him in Hell." But the greatest difficulty of the book is that there is little or nothing in Mr. Broadbent's comments on the several parts of the poem, admirable as these are at times, which gives them cohesion, nothing that unifies them. It is as if one were to scrutinize a great painting square inch by square inch, but never to see it as an artistic whole.

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Radical Innocence. The Contemporary American Novel by Ihab Hassan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961. Pp. viii + 362. \$6.00.

"My interest in the generation of novelists to which this study is addressed," Ihab Hassan remarks in the opening pages of *Radical Innocence*, "was formed by my reading in American literature, the modern European novel, Freudian and existentialist thought. The criticism of D. H. Lawrence, in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, proved to be both a hindrance and a creative irritant." In this way, Mr. Hassan introduces his subject and presents his credentials. And we know right off—seeing his title, hearing him name the sources of his inspiration and learning—we know precisely where he stands. Immediately, we realize that he's taken up a line of thought that runs from Morningside Heights to Missoula out to Berkeley then back to New Haven and points East. Wherever you go, Anthony Powell said two years ago, referring to my own journey on this road, you see a "tremendous American concern with the sources of the country's literature—or rather those sides of . . . literature which are specifically American."

Tremendous concern with the sources of literature is accompanied by solicitude of another kind, too, among critics who are convinced that the study of motive in art cannot be isolated from the study of motive in culture. Although neither can be isolated from the other and although critics are eager to identify certain radical motives in both spheres—nevertheless, they are determined to cherish the sanctity of each work of imagination. And only when they have analyzed the structures of art do they feel themselves to be properly equipped to trace connections between ideas and images. Only when they have composed an analysis of those elements which shape a work of art, are they convinced that their account of its meanings is pretty close to the heart of the affair, whatever the artist himself may think. The critic's mind moves, as we may say, from *mythos* to *logos*, proceeds to join *logos* with *epos*, and in the end returns from *epos* to *mythos*. For the most distinctive sign of this whole procedure is the critic's creation of a figurative language, a private symbolism, designed to incarnate the meaning of events in history and the pattern of actions in art.

Mr. Hassan is the kind of critic, then, who hopes to discover among diverse works of fiction certain similarities of aim and effect, similarities which will reveal deep currents of experience and attitude both in letters and culture. He is

absorbed in a work of revelation. And he adopts a method developed by predecessors who have sought to stylize the rituals and actions of society as these are embodied in the ritual actions of certain exemplary figures, heroes and heroines, Adamic heirs and sentimental or Gothic heiresses. It is a style, too, which presents special blandishments and risks. For the critic who makes a private symbol or fashions a fable is tempted to show how fabulous are his own talents. Instead of mediating between writers and readers, he tends to displace the writers, replace their subject with his own. The problem is not a matter of critical theory but of critical tact. And it is best dramatized by observing how often the word *brilliant* is used today in order to characterize the act of criticism, not to characterize achievement in art. This is now the leading cant term of our time. And because it refers to the chief quality of mind prized by reviewers and readers and publishers and editors, the word itself has become an event of literary culture not a judgment of value. Reflecting that condition of social life which David Riesman has made famous, a *brilliant* critic fulfills the requirements of what Riesman's mentor Erich Fromm calls the marketing orientation in modern life. A man today, Fromm says, measures his quality according to the principle of cost-plus: "his body, his mind and his soul are his capital, and his task in life is to . . . make a profit of himself." The *brilliant* critic, therefore, does not abstract and render, renew and expand, but instead remakes and diminishes a work of art. He is a businessman of letters who manipulates ideas for his own profit in order to show how well invested are his funds. He sells himself. A *brilliant* critic, perfect gem of a mind, sparkles with a radiance so clear that its light alone is all we can see.

I have referred to these techniques and tendencies in modern criticism not because I am moved to condemn Mr. Hassan's book but because his readers must know which enticements he has responded to, the hazards which by and large he's contrived to avoid. Early in this carefully made work, however, where Mr. Hassan compares a typical European hero's performance of Joseph Campbell's *rites de passage* with an American hero's—in these first sections the brilliance of the critic appears to be a capital concern. Touching all the bases of our "modern distemper," Hassan plays an adroit game of tag. Ranging from Sarajevo to Suez, from Spengler to Sartre—heedful of Versailles and Heidegger, Dachau and Buber, Hiroshima and Tillich, of every shining name in our dark time as well as some dull ones (Colin Wilson) tossed lightly in—ranging everywhere, Hassan turns up Camus' "I rebel—therefore we exist." This statement displays the modern self in its European lineaments: a rebel-victim rejects the invitation to heroism and becomes thereby an "anti-hero." He acts in recoil because he refuses to accept the world's non-human invitation to assist it to destroy him. "The rebel denies without saying No to life"; the victim succumbs without saying Yes to oppression. His American counterpart, whom Hassan traces from Massachusetts Bay to Faulkner's Big Woods, was accustomed to accept this invitation. Surviving his initiation, he emerged not invested with unique and prodigious manhood—the accomplishment of ancient heroes everywhere—but divested of everything, a victim. In our classic literature, "Youth takes upon itself the cumulative sins of God's country, and in the guise of a sacrificial victim redeems that act of Original Innocence which was the discovery of America." Today, neither rebel-victim nor victim-redeemer, he is estranged from the community whose invitation to self-sacrifice he's been trained to accept. And Hassan, ranging now from Van

Wyck Brooks' Saragasso Sea to the Corning Glass Conference, from Eartha Kitt to Alan Watts; offering along the way tidbits in criticism of Jean Stafford, Robie Macauley, Gore Vidal, Flannery O'Connor, Mailer, Bowles, Bourjaily, Brossard and the Beats—Hassan turns up the ways in which the ambiguities of redemption are replaced by "the ambiguities of martyrdom."

These are the ambiguities contained within and resolved by the phrase Hassan invents to isolate those deep motives which today turn our heroes—returned from Germany, Japan and Korea—into martyrs, not redeemers. "Radical, indeed, is that innocence which, drawing on the sacred anarchy of the soul . . . proposes to itself nothing less than the aboriginal freedom of man." No dream of utopia or salvation invites this person to engage in a new American version of the ancient mythic quest: "not power, not even love," only a dream of immortality propels him on his way. Until our day, writers were able to fashion rituals of communion, to imagine ways of union between "Self and World." Now writers decide that reconciliation is impossible and they portray despair or estrangement of the self. American heroes, disdaining surrender, dreaming of eternal life, consume their lives in fictions designed to harmonize an outrageous, anarchic dream of immortal being with the irremediable "sadness of human mortality."

Stated in bald paraphrase, these ideas strain the mind. And indeed Hassan tends to strain for a phrase at the exact point of argument where he should write clean. "Radical holiness," "grammar of freedom," "condition of performance," "the aboriginal Self," "testament of contrariety"—these are offered as if in definition or dilation but in truth serve as evasion of thought. What does support the argument as a whole, makes it far more convincing than my paraphrase reports, is a fusion of ideas drawn from Campbell and Northrop Frye. Arguing that contemporary fiction presents figures whose fate is neither comic nor tragic, only existential; that the existential pattern is itself at bottom "a variant of an established ironic mode," Hassan demonstrates how our ironic American existential fiction, our literature of the cold war, forms itself according to what Frye calls the *mythos* of winter.

Supporting these views, Hassan analyzes three novels—Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*, Swados' *Out Went the Candle*, Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*—as mythic actions in which the hero accepts an invitation that leads to "an encounter with necessity," itself one of three themes peculiar to the ironic mode. This sort of encounter, in turn, compels the hero to assume the role of a scapegoat in a form of fiction which Hassan calls "closed"—closed because the hero is denied the rites of self-renewal. When other writers choose other figures, the themes and forms shift too. Referring to the second of these as a "qualified encounter" with experience, Hassan studies Buechner's *A Long Day's Dying*, Malamud's *The Assistant*, Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, where the hero is no mere scapegoat but is presented as a self-deprecating saint or rogue whose action dispels all ideas of heroism. What he retains is "the dialectic between how things are and how they could be." The form of fiction in which this dialectic appears, in which, too, the character performs a drama of dissolution, Hassan names "suspended." The final form, "open," involves stories (Gold's *The Optimist*, Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* and Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*) which preserve the comic arts of human possibility. Because the laughter we hear is not open-hearted but is disheartened we know that this action and form report only an illusion, the notion that there is somehow a way to escape necessity.

Introducing in this way the argument and method which compose two-thirds of his book, Hassan presents himself not as a traveler on an endless journey into the territory ahead but—now I must shift the metaphor I opened with—as a virtuoso in the arts of modern design. Everything he's seen and heard and read and overheard falls into place in his mind and fills the spaces of this book. The clamor of all the voices of glamor, the chic and the dead, echo in an edifice made to contain both the grandest propositions and the tiniest gestures of the mind. Abstraction derived from the materials of social and intellectual and art history, of psychologic and philosophic and literary analyses—abstraction shapes the grid and real fictions provide the skin for Hassan's museum without walls. Outer space is held within. Form and function fuse. Take it as it stands, spacious and handsome according to designs made by Hassan the architect, an American well-trained in the new international style (Part I); drawn to scale by Hassan the engineer, ingenious in the mathematics of stress (Part II); sturdily raised by Hassan the general contractor, astute and inventive, conceiving new uses for old devices of structure (Part III)—take it so and you find yourself accommodated and stirred.

And there's no doubt you must take it so, in part anyway. For above the clamor Hassan's own voice speaks too, saying fine things about the design of art in America today. The voice itself is clearest heard during the final third of the volume where, referring to Mrs. McCullers, Capote, Salinger and Bellow, he treats each of these writers in detail and relates the details of their achievement to the design of his book—unites skin and grid in a synthesis tight enough to withstand crowding within and pressure without. Among these writers Hassan claims to see a progression in which recoil of the self gives way to "reconciliation between self and world." In Bellow's work, finally, he finds both a proclamation of radical innocence ("the native No written in thunder") and a celebration of love, of freedom outside Eden, beyond utopia and in spite of death. With this essay on Bellow, Hassan concludes his apocalyptic work. It is calculated to expand not to diminish our respect for the art of American letters and for the use of myth-theory as a stimulus to the critical imagination. Mainly it illustrates what Malcolm Bradbury has remarked is notable in the best American criticism today: no longer a "hobby for amateurs," it undertakes to serve as a "special form of psychic structure, an architecture for the soul."

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The Continuity of American Poetry by Roy Harvey Pearce. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961. Pp. xv + 442. \$7.50.

Those of us who knew Roy Harvey Pearce's earlier work, *The Savages of America* and his shorter essays on Hawthorne and Wallace Stevens, for example, expected a great deal of *The Continuity of American Poetry*. For Pearce, both as historian and literary critic, has shown himself one of the genuinely learned, comprehensive, acute minds among those who write of America. The book in many of its aspects disappoints us. Through a welter of words and phrases used in special senses, and often highly technical or obscure to begin with, we are compelled to grope in order to follow him. Even when we seem to emerge from

his tunnel into some sort of illumination, we continue in our confusion to doubt that it is daylight.

His thesis or theses seem plain enough, though in half a dozen places he states it or them in half a dozen different ways. Since the achievement of American poetry is the achievement of American culture as a whole, *The Continuity of American Poetry* is of necessity a study in cultural history. The history is simple—the American poet's compulsion to justify his existence as a poet. Puritan antinomianism (a term borrowed from theology meaning that the Christian is saved by grace rather than by moral righteousness) is the quality which appears in all later poetry. The antinomian, Adamic impulse, from the Puritan verse through Wallace Stevens, is the consistent one, though there are counter currents. As Puritan an inventor and as nineteenth century writer a creator, the poet in the twentieth century continues in Eliot as mythic, or if in the main current, as Adamic searcher for a sense of his own identity and historical mission.

American verse—and Pearce confines himself to the use of that which he considers genuinely inventive—is to be studied as “the special idiom of one generation . . . [,] a basic style,” or as a form of conservative expression, or as “Puritan poetry.” His proof of all this depends, of course, on a variety and complexity of careful definitions of the adjectives and nouns of his terms. But contradictions appear to remain unresolved: for example, the main stream, or all major American poetry, is conservative; yet the Pound-Eliot-Tate-Ransom group represent a conservative reaction against the main current. Historically or critically one finds it hard to accept his descriptions of certain qualities in his poets as “conservative.”

In order Professor Pearce discusses Puritan verse, the American epic, the poets of the nineteenth century flowering, the interim group, and the moderns. In his chapter on Puritan verse and its “impulse toward antinomianism,” he acknowledges that the history of American poetry is a history of the change in meaning of “invention” from discovering God's creation to creation by man himself. Then in the chapter on the American epic from the *Columbiad* through the *Cantos*, *The Bridge*, and *Paterson*, the use of traditional means to break away from tradition is demonstrated. Whitman's success and failure in *Song of Myself*, its quality of “process” rather than the superior “form,” its continuations and projections in Crane's *The Bridge*, receive penetrating treatment. Pound as Whitmanian and anti-Whitmanian epic poet, and his deep roots in the main stream of American verse, are insisted upon. For the struggle for self-identification and self-preservation is in all these epics. The story of American attempts at the epic is a story of our efforts to wrest a hero from history—and therein lies the failure.

Poe, Dickinson, Emerson, and Whitman in the next chapter are all treated in a fairly convincing establishment of the peculiar place of each in the American tradition. In a succeeding chapter Freneau, Bryant, the “Fireside” group of New Englanders, and Timrod and Hayne are surveyed similarly, with somewhat less sympathy but equal or superior insight. Somewhat surprisingly, on general as well as specific perspective of this book, Lanier comes off as well as or better than the others of this latter group.

“The Old Poetry and the New” shows Robinson in the tradition, as faithful to it in the honesty of his intention at least. Lindsay and Sandburg receive short shrift—in space just two pages. Then Frost is analyzed at length as the poet

who always knows what he is about, the poet who has made the unhappy discovery that he exists. In creating an orthodoxy of self, Frost has sacrificed variety and capaciousness.

Pound and the New Poetry, Eliot and the Poets of Myth, Ransom and Tate and Harvest of Southern History are the subject divisions of the chapter on the modern counter-current group. Here, as in *Gerontion*, the Adamic principle is foresworn. These men represent a crossroads, or impasse, in the continuity of American poetry. Tate's poetry is analyzed with a sort of hostility, Ransom's with sympathy.

Williams, Aiken, Cummings, Marianne Moore, and Wallace Stevens are the last subjects chosen to represent the tradition. Stevens rightly receives most of the attention. Here, as in separate essays on which this section is based, Pearce gives one of our best critiques in depth as he ponders this poet's place in the main stream. Stevens seems the culmination, the climax, of the Adamic tradition, for the Man with the Blue Guitar reaches the point of no return in his notes on the Supreme Fiction, how or whether it may be created, and the meaning of his own identity and the historical mission to which it may be put. All in all, Stevens, in intention, is nearer to Poe and Whitman than he can ever be to the poets of the future.

This book is, for all its irritations and confusions (for this reader) a stimulating, optimistic, yet sombre survey of one phase of our art and an attempt to find a unity in it. The very attempt is more ambitious than anything that has been done for our drama or fiction, for example. Part of the trouble is that the historian-critic had to do so much of the spadework himself. One hopes he will rewrite the book in ten or fifteen years when others have gone more widely and deeply than he was able to do into certain aspects of his subject.

Finally, this is a highly useful book. Disregarding the thesis-continuity idea, one will find in discussions of individual poems and authors, as Williams' *Paterson*, Whitman's *Song of Myself*, and Stevens in many instances, acute critiques, brilliant (one uses deliberately this much-abused word) explications which will be of service to any teacher or student. Pearce's commentaries should send us all back to the poems themselves.

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The Tragedy of Arthur: A Study of the Alliterative "Morte Arthure" by William Matthews. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960. Pp. x + 230. \$5.00.

During the past century poets and novelists have turned to the Arthurian legend and its adjacent stories with increasing frequency, adapting and reworking the material in ways that allow it to clarify, and be clarified by, the temper of times that are in many respects totally at odds with the age in which the legend originally became popular and spread. Scholarship has crept its belated pace, but the last twenty-five years have witnessed a renaissance in Arthurian criticism paralleled in intensity by the study of few other eras or areas of the whole of literature. More important, the best of this criticism suggests that at last the

material is well toward being out of the hands of the linguistic philologists, who treated it for so long merely as a kind of residuum from which to glean paradigms of archaic noun inflections and dialectal verb forms. Instead, scholars have become concerned more and more with the literary analysis of the *sens* and *matière* of the Arthurian stories; and more and more this approach helps to explain, implicitly at least, why the characters and motifs of these stories have appealed so strongly to the poets and novelists of our time. In their separate ways both creative writers and scholars appear to see the whole early development of the Arthurian legend as a kind of literary experiment in the creation of an almost utopian world, which rose and flourished on the strength of the humanistic values inherent in the best ideals of its system of chivalry, but which came to contain also, especially in the excesses of its system of courtly love, the tragic inexorability of its decline and fall.

Until very recently, however, scholars have been all too exclusively concerned with the French courtly versions of the Arthurian stories. Except for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the English romances have been little treated, and when treated at all, somewhat apologetically—as poor imitations of what are thought their finer, more polished French sources. For some time I have urged both in the classroom and in journals that, however different in kind, the English poems possess intrinsic literary merits of their own, and that they both need and deserve a great deal more careful and individual study than they have received. For one of the most deserving of these poems, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, that need seems to me remarkably well satisfied by Professor William Matthews' book, *The Tragedy of Arthur*.

Professor Matthews sets out openly to redeem from critical neglect "one of the great poems of Middle English literature, and one of the most important" (p. viii). Studies of this poem have been both few and sporadic, and concerned with such peripheral issues as its authorship, sources, dialect, and text; as a work of literary art and a reflector of poetic interests of the fourteenth century it has been almost entirely neglected. Thus the purpose of *The Tragedy of Arthur* is to examine the *Morte Arthure* against the literary and philosophical background of its own time and place—to show, in short, how in this poem a traditional theme became transformed to express a new "moral, intellectual, poetic" vision, within a newly conceived organic whole of "meaning, form, [and] content," and through the nearly perfect fusion of such qualities as "its brilliant descriptions, its realism and also its fantasy, its sympathy in characterization, its heroism, patriotism, pathos and religious sentiment" (p. ix).

The opening three chapters of Professor Matthews' study are more or less introductory. Chapter I provides a thorough summary of the events of the poem and of how these traditional events differ from the accounts given of them in older versions of the story, especially the chronicle versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and Layamon. Chapter II turns to an examination of the connections between the *Morte Arthure* and the medieval Alexander legend. The most overt of these connections have frequently been noted; in addition to the poet's several specific references to Alexander, there are in the poem, as Matthews points out, a number of "obscured allusions that presume knowledge of [Alexander's] story on the part of the audience" (p. 34). These furnish a starting point for the author's very full analysis of other and more subtle connections between the two stories—verbal echoes, similarities in the spirit of some episodes,

and parallels in the broad patterns of motifs of others. The argument is well guarded here. Matthews admits in advance that these similarities and parallels "vary considerably in impressiveness" (p. 34). Yet whatever their variety, their cumulative force is, to me at least, convincing enough to support Matthews' contention that the *Morte Arthure* poet knew and adapted from "at least *Voeux du Paon*, *Fuertes de Gadres*, and some Latin or vernacular version of the story of Alexander related in Leo's *Historia de Preliis*" (p. 39), and that he probably knew, as well, other Middle English Alexander romances which also derived to some extent from these three works.

Chapter III deals with the two "strongly divided" interpretations placed upon the story and character of Alexander during the late middle ages. To some men Alexander was "the ideal ruler and military leader, whose activities were considered a model at which the princes of their own land might well aim" (p. 71). To others, especially to moral and religious writers such as Hoccleve, Gower, and Lydgate, he was monstrously corrupt; begotten of the devil, he was attributed in these and other writers' works every possible vice, from worldly pride and ambition to tyranny and mass murder. This second view accords perfectly with Alexander's frequent assignment to the rôle of the cruel and arrogant hero of the conventional tragedy of Fortune, but the striking duality of interpretation that it poses seems to stem from a conflict of literary and social aims. For, while fourteenth-century literature abundantly demonstrates "the continued hold that Alexander retained upon the imagination of medieval writers," other thinkers of the age came almost habitually to link Alexander with "the problem of war and peace in the fourteenth century" (p. 80)—a problem whose political, philosophical, and theological ramifications were treated by such medieval authorities as St. Thomas Aquinas, Honoré Bonet, Lucas de Penna, Jean de Montreuil, Alain Chartier, and others (pp. 80-88).

Professor Matthews sets his discussion of the *Morte Arthure*, then, against the background of these chapters on the Alexander story and the connections of that story with medieval attitudes toward the justification of war and conquest. Once we have seen that the *Morte Arthure* poet "is to be numbered amongst Alexander's strongest critics," we are prepared for Matthews' careful analysis of the structure and theme of the poem and for his thesis that the poet's "association of Alexander with Arthur is one of the principle leads to the uncouth meaning he discovers in the traditional story of Arthur's imperial war and the rebellion in which the Arthurian world is brought to ruin" (p. 93). That "uncouth meaning" is explicated in Chapters IV and V especially, and hinges on nearly every aspect of the poet's handling of his material—on his sense of the dramatic, the quality of his humor, his use of the supernatural, his limitation of subject, his ordering of chronology, his sure feeling for scene and mood, style and diction. Further still, it hinges on his complex characterization of King Arthur, who, "conceived in the context of Christian views of unjustified war and influenced by medieval Christian opinion of Alexander the Great" (p. 141), is on the one hand the noble and chivalric king of the romance tradition, and on the other hand even more the stern and haughty "conquerour" than his prototype in the chronicle tradition. Added to the many similarities already noted between the Arthur and Alexander stories, this complexity of characterization makes the poet's intention unmistakably clear: he views King Arthur with the same duality of attitude as the fourteenth century in general viewed Alexander;

and as Matthews shows, in the *Morte Arthure* King Arthur's tragedy is, like Alexander's, a tragedy of Fortune.

Following these central chapters, Professor Matthews turns to two somewhat more speculative matters. Chapter VI argues for the centrality of the *Morte Arthure* among a number of the Middle English poems which comprise what is now generally referred to as the fourteenth-century alliterative revival. The similarities among these poems have often been noted; Dorothy Everett, for example, commented upon their "many and puzzling resemblances in phraseology, style, and theme," but concluded, with most other scholars, that "ignorance of the exact date of most of the poems often makes it impossible to decide which way the borrowing went" (*Essays on Middle English Literature*, Oxford [1955], p. 47). Matthews contends, and with a good deal of convincing supporting evidence, that, like *Piers Plowman*, the *Morte Arthure* was central to several of these alliterative poems, directly influencing at least the *Awntyrs of Arthure* and *Golagros and Gawane*. The second realm of Matthews' speculation, however, and the evidence that he brings to its support, are to my mind not so convincing. In an "Epilogue" which he somewhat self-consciously likens to "a journey through the scholarly wasteland" (p. 179), Matthews turns "wodewose and shapechanger" to suggest that the *Morte Arthure* poet took his material from a now lost French source "inspired by the happenings of the early years of the Hundred Years' War" (p. 183), and that his characterizations of Arthur, Guenevere, and Mordred are meant allegorically to represent Edward III, Edward II's Isabella, and her paramour Mortimer, respectively. I will not press here my general distrust of assuming hypothetical lost sources or of inventing neat historical allegories; the speculation of these last pages, entirely aside from any question of validity, seems to me simply "tagged on" and scatters anticlimactically the really solid effects of the previous chapters.

Despite my uneasiness about the "Epilogue"—which perhaps might more appropriately have appeared as an article in one of the journals—I feel that *The Tragedy of Arthur* is a significant achievement in an all too neglected area of literary scholarship. Probably not everyone will agree with every point that Professor Matthews makes or with every interpretation that he places upon his material; but it is a painstakingly thorough and careful analysis; well organized and well written, it is confined to no special emphasis and advances no single dogmatic interpretation, and this last point is in itself notable in this age of "patristic exegeticism" in the criticism of medieval literature. Instead, Matthews assumes from the beginning that the *Morte Arthure* poet was an intelligent human being and a creative artist, bent upon constructing a structurally and thematically unified work of literary art; and he concentrates steadily on the ingredients—poetic, historic, and philosophic—with which the poet achieved his purpose.

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The Universal Self, A Study of Paul Valéry by Agnes E. Mackay. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961. Pp. xiv + 264. \$5.50.

Recent studies of French Symbolist and post-Symbolist poets have contributed greatly to our understanding not only of modern French literature but of the sources of much contemporary English and American poetry as well. Miss Mackay's timely study, coinciding as it does with a series of translations of Valéry's works (edited by Jackson Mathews for Bollingen Foundation), presents a good introduction to the thought and work of one of France's great poets. Also—though this is not Miss Mackay's expressed aim—it brings into focus a major influence on writers of our own language. Readers of T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens will welcome this discussion of a poet whom our own poets have studied and admired.

Miss Mackay's stated aim is to show, through a close analysis of the development of Valéry's thought, that he "turned a page in the history of poetic composition." Living through a period in which poetry was moving toward a spontaneous and sometimes formless expression, Valéry continued the work of his master, Mallarmé, in his attempt to perpetuate, or revive, an art of formal perfection by achieving a complete unity between the intellectual Self and its language. He wished to express the life of the mind through symbolic images in a language as "pure" and precisely composed as possible, and, as Miss Mackay puts it, "thus reinstate poetry as a 'formal' art and at the same time enlarge the scope of personal experience through a psychological relationship with all that appears universal. This conception deserves to be acknowledged as a definite progression in the art of poetry."

Beginning with Valéry's boyhood in the south of France, Miss Mackay recounts his relations with André Gide, Pierre Louÿs, and his poetic idol Mallarmé, stressing the men and events in Valéry's life only insofar as they bear significantly on his intellectual development. She discusses his early love of Nature—source of symbols in his later poetry; she records his dramatic decision to abandon all ideas of a "facile literary career" and to subject his life and mind to rigid "laws" through whose discipline he would resist a powerful sensibility which threatened to overwhelm his intellect. He was to turn all his intellectual powers to discovering a method of achieving what others since Descartes had attempted to achieve: total awareness—the raising of one's consciousness to the "highest possible abstraction" by applying the exact principles of mathematics to thought, by studying the consciousness of oneself, for oneself, and thus through the power of organized thought creating "a new Self in a second consciousness." Miss Mackay explains how, after having developed his powers of consciousness and knowledge to the highest possible degree (and having acknowledged the impossibility of fully achieving this lofty aim), Valéry broke his long silence and returned to the writing of poetry as the best means of giving form to the discoveries of *le Moi pur*.

Valéry's search for a method of controlling and studying the processes of his own thought led him to construct an elaborate and abstruse "intellectual psychology." To clarify this psychology in the few chapters devoted to that end is a formidable task, and Miss Mackay is not entirely successful. Realizing that much of the difficulty of Valéry's theories lies in his rather special terminology, she undertakes to define some of his key words (or "laws," as he called them):

Functional, Plein Mental, Pouvoir, Self-Variance (Miss Mackay disconcertingly alternates between original French and English translation, for no apparent reason), *Omnivalent, Tropism, Implex*—all of which terms, and others which she does not discuss (*Continuité*), are essential to an understanding of Valéry's theory of the Pure or Universal Self. However, Miss Mackay often limits herself to presenting Valéry's thought by summary and paraphrase rather than by elucidation, and relies on an abstract Valerian terminology that is more obscure in English than in the original French—the result, I believe, of her wishing to examine problems from Valéry's own point of view, to bring his own commentaries to bear on his writings, commentaries which are sometimes as opaque as the works they are supposed to clarify. And occasionally she confuses the reader as to matters of fact: on page 71 we read "After Mallarmé's death in 1898 . . ." and on page 74 we read ". . . Valéry tells us of his last visit to Mallarmé at Valvins, on July 14, 1899." But my principal objection is to those not infrequent occasions when Miss Mackay offers us a clump of murky prose and leaves us to struggle with it unassisted by any elucidation or meaningful interpretation by the author. The following, for example, is a description of Valéry's intentions of assimilating the language of poetry to the language of mathematics:

In geometry, intellectual forms resembling each other are dealt with according to an unchanging order. Common notions, engaged in different propositions, serve as links to unite other concepts to which they were separately attached. There remains nothing of thought but its pure acts through which it is changed and transformed into an abstract of itself, until finally it extracts from its shadows the whole play of its operations.

Those of us whose unmathematical minds boggle at such business turn with some relief to Miss Mackay's discussion of Valéry's later poetry: *La Jeune Parque*, *Le Cimetière marin*, and the poems of *Charmes*. For, after a brief but lucid discussion of Valéry's theories of composition and language, she takes up first his major poems and then his later prose works, and gives each an illuminating reading. She succeeds, in a few succinct phrases, in directing the reader's attention to the sources of meaning and power in the poems and convinces the reader, if he needs convincing, that he is in the presence of great art indeed.

She approaches these works, once again, through the definition of key words: *pur*, *absence*, *composer*, *candeur*, *extrême*, *singulier*—cognates of English words which seem simple enough but which take on meanings in the poetry. She explains that Valéry "renewed complex poetic diction by adopting, from all the variations of sense which a word has acquired in its course, that which sums up its most significant attributes so that such words possess a greater density of substance and a greater evocative force." In analyzing the later prose works—essays, dialogues, drama—she explains Valéry's preoccupation with principles of form embodied in music, architecture, poetry, and their interrelations; and she shows the continuity of Valéry's thought, these works being further explorations into the nature of consciousness, the Pure or Universal Self.

Despite what appear to me to be flaws in Miss Mackay's work, this is a good book, rich in insights and materials essential to an understanding of Valéry's art. It could have been a better book if the author had applied herself to rendering Valéry's often elusive thought into plain English. It could be done—without undue oversimplification—because it has been done elsewhere. But in all fairness it should

be stressed that the obscure chapters are relatively few compared with the many chapters of valuable and stimulating interpretation; I have dwelt on the faulty ones only because they provide the intellectual foundations of Valéry's poetry and the bases of Miss Mackay's own explications. But as an over-all view of Valéry's work, this book is indeed valuable, and, along with comparable studies by Norman Suckling and Elizabeth Sewell, provides a solid point of departure for more specialized studies of those obscure areas which Miss Mackay could only touch upon.

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