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Book Reviews

A Definition of Tragedy by Oscar Mandel. New York: New York University Press, 1961. Pp. viii + 178. \$4.50.

It is ironic, but not improper, that we who from day to day live out the tragedy of Western Civilization should so earnestly be attempting to define the quality which makes our lives indubitably tragic. Oscar Mandel's undertaking, the latest of several books on the general subject, brings forth, with perceptive practical criticism of the main works of tragedy from the Greeks to the present, a "stipulative" definition "from experience with the texts." It is this:

A work of art is tragic if it substantiates the following situation: A protagonist *who commands our earnest good will* is impelled in a given world by a purpose, or undertakes an action, of *a certain seriousness and magnitude*; and by that very purpose or action, subject to that same given world, necessarily and inevitably meets with *grave spiritual or physical suffering*. (Mandel's italics)

This is a rather good approximation of what many people mean by the concept. I can think of no definition (including Aristotle's) more likely to command general consent. Yet it is notable that it is quite modern, not to say existentialist, in its silence on the question of the moral quality of the protagonist's action. (Mandel intends to account for such disparate examples as Aeschylus' *Prometheus*, Euripides' *Medea*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Ibsen's *Ghosts*, and Miller's *The Crucible*.) Since he believes the emotional effect of tragedy to be irrelevant to its definition, he omits any commitment to the traditional pity and fear of the experience. Moreover, it is implicit in his argument that the tragic view of life is "only one of the aspects under which life is considered." It is not a final way of looking at things—hence, not necessarily right or true.

Doubtless man will never attain a full perspective of his earthly existence; he will always need imagination and faith. For Mandel, tragedy not only possesses no such summary vision; he very definitely rejects the supposition that it is an idea common to all the forms of serious art. For there are also, he maintains, the paratragic forms like the "tragédie heureuse" of the French 17th century, in which the protagonist is at last successful; and the characteristically episodic Elizabethan drama (Mandel's example is *Julius Caesar*, in which, as he would read the play, Brutus' noble act has a by no means inevitable consequence). But, it will be remarked, Mandel does speak of tragedy as "true to the world," "timeless and typical," representative of the "human situation." "It adapts itself to the thought and ethos of every age." "Life offers us the model." Evidently, then, tragedy has some kind of real validity, however partial it may be. Mandel really wants it both ways. Tragedy is significant, but it is also just one possible organization of the materials. He would probably deny that this conclusion has anything to do with these correlatives of his position: 1) tragedy lacks any specific "ethical direction"; 2) it has no necessary "post-tragic" meaning or significance; 3) it is an idea devoid of emotive connotation; 4) it is not an artifact, but, on the other hand, neither is it an experience available from life as well as from art. (Mandel is particularly harsh with I. A. Richards.)

There is the further difficulty that tragedy is ordinarily, as Mandel recognizes, an "honorific" term. If it may be thought that plays with villains as protagonists are perversions of the form (Aristotle speaks of "noble" and "base" tragedies), Mandel is satisfied, it appears, that some men can probably feel "earnest good will" even toward Richard III and *Athalie*. In certain plays, it is true, the wicked are made so representative and sympathetic that we not only can, we must identify ourselves with their wicked acts. In others, the tragic quality is maintained solely by emphasis on "waste"; in still others, the poetry is of itself nearly enough. Undeterred by this problem, Mandel claims as the merit of his definition that it is eclectic and neutral.

Since Mandel thinks of himself as walking in the footsteps of Aristotle, it is worth noting that he asserts his method to be "purely aesthetic" and non-metaphysical; he admits, nevertheless, that Aristotle has a firm metaphysics and firm ethics. He probably has been influenced by those (the Chicago critics?) who prefer to explain Aristotle's mind as being rigidly compartmentalized. From S. H. Butcher, who also thinks aesthetics to be a discipline quite separate from ethics, Mandel borrows the notion that Aristotle's ideal hero is "not preeminently just or virtuous" (a highly questionable translation of the Greek), and he tends to speak of tragic consequences as following inevitably from moral frailty and flaw in character rather than from great error (this view, often reasonable as an interpretation of Shakespearean and modern tragedy, is not clearly Aristotelian). Also, he repudiates Krutch's definition of tragedy as requiring nobility in the hero, but he agrees with him that a noble man and old-fashioned tragedy cannot nowadays exist. At his dourest, in fact, Mandel denies that noble men may be supposed ever to have existed. And no doubt that is why he finds it unnecessary to postulate good moral choice, or even so much as good intent, in the tragic protagonist; tragedy exists, rather, to depict evil in life.

In Aristotelian matters Mandel owes much to F. L. Lucas. (He has not, it seems, read Humphry House's sane little commentary, for it does not appear in his very useful bibliography.) Lucas conceives Aristotle as a philistine—"not fond of literature" is Mandel's way of putting it, in spite of his respect for the Master. This may be one reason why he feels free to disregard altogether Aristotle's clear concern with the effect of literature. But no doubt he also considers the discussion of *catharsis* to be fruitless; he speaks of the "oddity of this requirement." It may well be impossible ever to recover Aristotle's full meaning for the term, but surely we can reasonably repudiate Lucas's views (not original with him, of course) that the Greeks established their theaters as therapeutic institutions where the populace might void themselves of pity and fear, to issue forth with "sweet peacefulness" of spirit. Mandel expresses no hesitation about this as being what *catharsis* implied, although Aristotle nowhere expresses any abhorrence of pity and fear as such, nor does he recommend their elimination; rather, he advises that they be directed toward proper objects.

This book will prove a disputatious companion to the study of the *Poetics*. Mandel's deductions and elaborations will challenge any reader. But it may be well to warn the unsuspecting that on many points we still do not know what Aristotle meant. And, on others, the guesses hitherto as to his meaning have not all been equally good.

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The Founding of English Metre by John Thompson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961. Pp. ix + 181. \$5.00.

The purpose and method of Dr. Thompson's book are stated as follows (p. 1): "to explain what metre is, why it exists, and how metre has developed in English literature" by examining in detail "specimens of the verse of the one short crucial period of English poetry," from Wyatt through Sidney. The approach is based on modern findings of structural linguists. Dr. Thompson confesses that he is not a trained linguist, but he *is* a poet and a critic of poetry.

Dr. Thompson begins by apologizing that his work is not "a comfortable study." It is not comfortable reading, either. Of necessity, I suppose, it frequently becomes a mere catalogue of scattered lines illustrating one or another metrical practice; an immense amount of largely drudge work underlies a work of this kind. The book could, however, have been made more easily readable with better paragraphing and more crisp sentences. And more careful proof-reading would have cleared up some troublesome readings: e. g., misplaced or wrong diacritical markings (as on pp. 19, 35); "length of duration" for "length or duration" (p. 10); "adpating" for "adapting" (p. 30); "speech" for "stress" (p. 48 l. 18); and "ababa" for "ababb" as the opening rhyme scheme of rhyme royal (p. 85).

Of greater significance are errors in quotations from primary sources, where above all inaccuracy is unforgivable. In spot checks of Thompson's quotations from Wyatt, *The Mirror for Magistrates*, Spenser, and Sidney, I have found some fifty errors in transcription. Some of them do violence to the sense: e. g., "whose" for "whoe" (p. 56 l. 35), "priese" for "prieße" (p. 105 l. 22), "says" for "sayd" (p. 141 l. 7). Most of them, to be sure, are metrically nonsubstantive, involving changes in capitalization and punctuation, careless modernization of spellings, and the like: e. g., "Mydnight" for "Mydnyght" (p. 55 l. 35), "Layeing" for "Layeng" (p. 59 l. 44), "waxen" for "wexen" (p. 105 l. 12), "than" for "then" (p. 105 l. 34). But at least one destroys a rhyme: "worke" for "warke" (p. 59 l. 35). A few eliminate what might have been syllabic *-e*'s: e. g., "Bulls" for "Bulles" (p. 97 l. 39), "Most" for "Moste" (p. 97 l. 23), "flock" for "flocke" (p. 104 l. 22). And some are unquestionably distortions: "rushed" for "rushd" (p. 59 l. 43), "when laughs" for "when he laughs" (p. 22 l. 15), "with his holy" for "with holy" (p. 97 l. 15). There are four wrong line-references on pp. 105-106. In the face of such cavalier, even slipshod, treatment of his primary sources, it is difficult to trust the rest of Dr. Thompson's work.

Certain interpretive details also provoke distrust. Dr. Thompson says (p. 122) that there is only one reversed foot in Spenser's "January," that in l. 42; but besides trochaic first feet (which he apparently excludes) I find reversed feet in the third foot of l. 7, the fourth of l. 36, the fourth of l. 76, and perhaps the second of l. 63. Dozens of Dr. Thompson's scansiones are questionable at best; I can give only a few examples (using the diacritical markings explained in the book, p. 6 n. 1):

o s | o s | o s | o o s | [o s]
A cloudie showr, mingled with hail, I shall. [p. 30]

Almost certainly Surrey meant *showr* to be a monosyllable, resulting in a trochaic third foot and an iambic fourth: those old spellings were not always meaningless. Not once does Dr. Thompson mention the spondee; thus, to avoid what he frequently calls "clashing stresses," he insists on scanning the following Miltonic line with an iambic second:

$\overset{o}{\text{W}}\text{ith } \overset{s}{\text{h}}\text{ead, } \overset{o}{\text{h}}\text{ands, } \overset{s}{\text{w}}\text{ings, } \overset{o}{\text{f}}\text{ee } \overset{s}{\text{p}}\text{ursues } \overset{o}{\text{h}}\text{is } \overset{s}{\text{w}}\text{ay. [p. 8]}$

Finally, there are apparent inconsistencies in details. On pp. 28-29 we find a rather impressionistic (though I think valid) interpretation of a Wyatt line because of the location of the strong stresses; but on p. 95 Thompson curiously denies that the movement of stresses in some Spenser lines would make any difference. And far more individual lines are analyzed for Wyatt and Surrey (at the beginning of the book) than for Sidney (at the end).

There are merits in Dr. Thompson's book. The definition of verse in the Introduction is useful, as is a tabulation of poets' uses of different stanza forms (Appendix A). Chapter V, "Classical Metres," arrives at an interesting and plausible conclusion: that Sidney's and Spenser's experiments in quantitative verse were a "turning point" (the too-strong phrase is from the book jacket) by which poets learned how to achieve poetic "tension" through a deliberate opposition between the metrical pattern and the sound-patterns of the language. But most of the general conclusions are not very new, and the substantiating details which might have been new are so questionable that even valid conclusions become suspect.

I have concentrated on details because a work of this sort makes its impact through details (as Dr. Thompson says, p. 3). But there is a more fundamental objection to this book which is symbolized in its title. When the work was a Columbia University doctoral dissertation (1957), it was called "The Iambic Line from Wyatt to Sidney," and the nature of the study does not justify the change to "The *Founding* of English Metre." It is largely true, as Dr. Thompson says, that Sidney's contributions to the iambic line established "the basic system of using metre and language . . . for the English poetry of the three centuries that followed" (p. 156); in this sense I suppose we are dealing with the "founding" of English metre. Unfortunately, however, Dr. Thompson says almost nothing about the *foundations*. In Chapter V, he uses two or three sentences to say that Sidney and Spenser would have known their classical metrical principles. What he does not say is that earlier poets would have known them too—that in fact they learned their metrics from the study of Latin poets; nothing is more explicit than this in T. W. Baldwin's book *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (II, 380-416). What is needed, then, is a study which will determine the connection between the school exercises of the young Sackville, say, and the original poetry which he later produced. For example, the sixteenth century had a long dispute over the propriety of substituting one kind of foot for another in the Latin iambic trimeter line, and people importantly concerned with English education (e. g., Cheke and Ascham) were vitally aware of the dispute. In view of the educational methods of the sixteenth century, there is almost certainly some connection between that dispute and what happened in the development of the English iambic line. Careful studies based on structural linguistics or other critical methods might produce valid results in evaluating

what the Renaissance produced. But in the absence of a more fundamental study, I suggest that we shall not get very far toward a knowledge of *how* and *why* English metrics developed as they did—toward a knowledge of the “founding” of English metre.

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Curt Sachs: The Wellsprings of Music, ed. Jaap Kunst. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962. Pp. xi + 228. Guilders 19.

The late Curt Sachs has long been famous as a seeker of first principles. In this book he draws together for the last time his ideas concerning music as a worldwide phenomenon. After the author's death, completion of the text was undertaken by another great scholar of world music, Jaap Kunst. He also did not live to see the book in print. Two of Kunst's students saw the book through its final proofs. This may account for the several misprints and the rather pallid index which employs only names of persons mentioned in the text or notes.

The doubly posthumous aspect of this book seems to add a special aura to its significance. It stands for the end of that generation of European-trained scholars who fought a long, slow battle for the recognition of the scholastic validity of studying music other than that of the Western art world. Thanks to their efforts the battle is largely over. So-called ethnomusicology has a permanent place in the scholastic world. The very fact that men like Sachs and Kunst were equally at home among madrigals and the evolution of the violin as they were with the music of Java or the instruments of Madagascar helped to win respect for the study of the latter subjects. They are sorely missed by their friends, but their scholastic legacies will perpetuate their memories and inculcate new generations of scholars for years to come.

In his preface Kunst says that he avoided making important changes in the text even though he might question some points. He mentions some changes only in comments on Javanese music, his special field. Herein lies the problem with any book that attempts a world synthesis. The writer cannot possibly hear and see every kind of music *in situ*. In general, he must rely on records, museum collections, and field notes taken by other persons. This has been of necessity Sachs's basic approach. It inevitably means that some materials will be used to illustrate what, to the field specialist, is not a true aspect of the music. For example, what the reviewer knows of Japanese music makes the description of *noh* singing (p. 89) very suspect and the statement about the rhythm in *noh* wrong (p. 193). The myth that most oriental music is improvisational also seems to die very hard. Each “expert” will, no doubt, find similar inaccuracies in the use of material from his particular niche. The importance of the book, however, lies far more in the theories it purports and their potential for intellectual stimulation than in the material used to prove the theories. Since this book is for Sachs a last statement, the intent of this review is to point out some of the basic premises and let the reader decide for himself their validity.

The first chapter traces the history of interests in exotic music from the time of the Greeks to the present. It concludes with a section on methodology with many specific suggestions concerning such practical problems as notation. The

section on the theories of the origin of music reviews the many approaches, but states that the question cannot be answered. Sachs likewise feels that the complicated web of the life of even archaic man (his word preference over the term "primitive man") precludes sweeping generalizations about the single origin of musical phenomena or its antithesis, polygenesis. One feels, however, that there is a diffusionist tendency in his writing.

Chapter two deals with the origin of melody, conservatism and magic, vocal mannerism, instruments, rhythm, and form in early music. Sachs's concept of melody begins with two basic types: 1) the emotional tumbling strain with its penchant for an octave range, and 2) one step melodies with only two adjacent tones. He illustrates these ideas with examples from a variety of cultures as he does with other principles throughout the book. This is done not only with notated examples but also with footnoted record selections, primarily on the Ethnic Folkways label. The references throughout the book provide ample avenues for further study along the lines of reasoning found in the text. The citations are complete since there is no bibliography in the book.

In chapters four, five, and six, Sachs expands the melodic theory by discussing the addition of notes within or outside the nuclear structure (infixes and affixes). Though Sachs has a penchant for inventing new terms he is not interested in more scholarly, scientific-sounding terms for their own sake. He would do away with the terms "ditonic" and "tritonic" and say merely one or two-step melodies. Perhaps some might prefer the terms two or three *note* melodies; but the basic idea of stating simple ideas in simple terms is laudable, particularly in a field which sometimes seems anxious to emulate modern science in its race for esoteric nomenclature. Sachs rejects his own former term "logogenic" (p. 68) as not really appropriate to the smaller step melodies. He uses terms for clarity and lets the scholastic merit of his ideas lie in their logic, not in the number of syllables required to create a Greco-Latin derived defining word.

The dynamics of cultural change are the subject of chapter three, entitled "On the Way." The forces from within a culture and influences from outside are held as the two paramount stimuli to change. While artistic creation is a personal act, it must be prompted by collective needs. "The individual creates; society accepts or refuses" (p. 138). Nevertheless, "very little in music can be fully traced to social and technical change" (p. 133). Sachs reminds the reader that judgments of music value and performance excellence can come best from actual carriers of the specific culture.

Chapter seven shows the widespread practice of polyphony in both rudimentary and relatively complex forms. Sachs uses the term to mean any kind of music in which notes are performed more than one at a time. For him, harmony and counterpoint should be called vertical and horizontal polyphony. He defines heterophony as "every type of part performance left to tradition and improvisation" (p. 191). Unconscious heterophony in which various people sing independent tunes or pay no attention to specific pitch lengths in the same tune is, for him, non-polyphonic. The normal congregational rendition of a hymn is cited as an example. When a single voice and an instrument are combined, heterophony becomes conscious. The term "simultaneous" or "coincident variation" is used for the more usual meaning of heterophony today. He considers possible definitions before arriving at the one given above. Even then he admits a flexibility in his final choice because many heterophonies, such as much Japanese music, are notated or at least very fixed in their performances.

Chapter eight reiterates Sachs's position on cross or poly-rhythms as found in his book, *Rhythm and Tempo*. Because of the confusion between simultaneous differences in rhythm and successive differences, Sachs prefers the word "cross" rhythm for "simultaneous differences in several parts" (p. 194). There follows a somewhat clouded discussion of other aspects of rhythm. He compares the almost melodic "additive" quality of rhythm in India with the more directly percussive, "divisive" rhythm of Africa.

Chapter nine provides interesting insights into the various stages of professionalism in music and the origin of musical nomenclature. He feels a strong connection between the rise of instrumental music and the establishment of musical terms.

The final chapter, entitled "Progress?" strikes down the evolutionist approach to music. Fluctuation, via culture graft, progress, or simple change, is the word chosen by Sachs. The neat concept of the trend from simplicity to complexity does not hold in the light of evidence. Sachs's complete theory of fluctuation is found in his *Commonwealth of Art*, but its application to world culture is best stated here. For Sachs "progress exists at best within a limited span; as to the total art, there is no progress, no regress, but simply otherness" (p. 217). The problem of the comparative worth of an Eskimo tune and a Beethoven symphony is pointless for Sachs, as they are incomparable. Each serves a different aim and set of values. "Music is not a universal language. Even the Westerner has to learn his own musical idiom as if it were a foreign language" (p. 219). The white man ". . . should learn to realize that . . . we can be as primitive in other people's eyes as they appear in ours" (p. 219).

While Western music may have much wider scope, it has been at the expense of a lesser social significance; "diversification leads to estrangement" (p. 221). As mass communications pull the world ever closer to a grey-flannel or blue-denim culture, Sachs points out in his final paragraph the value of non-western music studies to the Western culture carrier: "The awareness of this deep-rooted contrast will not change our destined ways. We cannot escape from the culture that we ourselves have made. But seeing and weighing the differences between the two musical worlds might help us in realizing that our gain is our loss, that our growth is our wane. It might help to understand that we have not progressed, but simply changed. And, when seen from a cultural viewpoint, we have not always changed to the better."

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Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute by Anna Balakian. New York: Noonday Press, 1959. Pp. 209. \$4.50.

Within its limits, Anna Balakian's study is a very good book. Refusing to patronize or ridicule the *enfants terribles* of French literature during the period *entre les deux guerres*, she makes a spirited plea for the continuing claims of surrealist poetry on our attention. Her survey of the course of the movement provides a lucid exposition for the reader unfamiliar with the subject, but even the most knowledgeable of scholars will have much to learn from her pages. Her refusal to repeat the clichés that clutter the manuals of literary history is

proof of a keen critical intelligence reappraising a large body of difficult writing. Even in France, there is considerable disagreement concerning the character of literary surrealism and the value of the work of its leading practitioners. Miss Balakian does not hesitate to take a position in matters of acute controversy, and even if one is not likely to agree with all of her judgments, her imaginative sympathy and enthusiasm enables her to give vitality and freshness to her subject.

The book is divided into three parts: "the signal lights"; "the road"; and "the bend in the road." The first of these sets forth the historical background, previously explored by the author in her *Literary Origins of Surrealism* (1947), and places special attention on four writers: Lautréamont, St.-Pol-Roux, Apollinaire, and Reverdy. The second section deals with the philosophical and literary theories of Breton, and with the surrealist image and object as expressed in poetic technique. In the third part the author considers "the post-surrealism of Aragon and Eluard," and the present state and importance of the surrealist enterprise. It will be observed that her view of surrealism is limited exclusively to French literature, and indeed, to the official representatives of an *école littéraire*. Thus, Apollinaire and Reverdy emerge as precursors of André Breton and his confrères. At the opposite end, the outbreak of World War Two and the dispersion of the surrealist *cénacle* marks the end of the movement in the strict sense in which it is here discussed.

This limitation undoubtedly has some historical justification, but a broader view would see surrealism as one of the main currents of western literature of our day, with even more significant poetic consequences in Spain and Latin America than in France. Surrealism enters directly into the major poetry of virtually every nation in both the old world and the new. Like romanticism, naturalism, symbolism, expressionism, and other movements of modern literature, surrealism is international in scope and should be studied from a comparative point of view if its accomplishment is to be properly understood. I am sure Miss Balakian would agree that "romanticism" does not mean simply French romanticism. From an esthetic standpoint, the poetry of the official members of the Paris school of surrealists is markedly inferior to such collections as Neruda's *Residencia en la Tierra* or García Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York*, and it would be difficult to find a French surrealist poem of the intensity and poignancy of Lorca's "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías." Guillermo de Torre, José Luis Cano, Angel del Río, and several others have pointed out the importance of surrealism in contemporary Spanish poetry; the same needs to be done for Italy, Germany, England, and the United States, where surrealism came to be fused with other literary traditions and techniques. Surrealist elements and affinities are central to American poets as varied as Ezra Pound, E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane, and the "beat" poets. It may be too early for a comprehensive study of literary surrealism, but with the passage of time, the international character of the movement should become increasingly clear.

It is also doubtful that subsequent students of the literature will share the official notion of French surrealism, derived from André Breton, which obliges Miss Balakian to see Apollinaire and Reverdy as precursors and Char and Artaud as post-surrealists. I am aware of the tendency to group Apollinaire and Reverdy along with Cendrars, Jacob, Cocteau, and other contemporaries, as cubist poets, but the distinction is at best nominal. None of these writers subscribed to the unduly restrictive formula of André Breton and his followers, yet the similarities

in all of their works are far more striking than the differences. If surrealism is defined as a mode of expression rather than a philosophy or a way of life, it can be enlarged as a critical and historical concept without doing violence to the work of individual poets. Miss Balakian is herself aware of the distinction between surrealism as "the closely-knit spiritual union of artists and writers who operated under the common trademark" (p. 165), and what she calls the "broader sense" of the expression of a spiritual crisis of our time in a particular technique and vision. Yet, almost throughout her study, she employs the term in its restricted rather than its enlarged meaning.

One hesitates to seem ungrateful when offered so much by way of rediscovery and illumination. The essay on Pierre Reverdy is easily the best criticism in English that has been written on his work, and shows conclusively what a great neglected poet he was. Only now, since his death, do we see a true appreciation of his art beginning to gain ground in France. Anna Balakian does well to assert that "Pierre Reverdy comes closer to defining the spiritual and aesthetic position of the modern poet than anyone else in France in his time" (p. 78). Her account of Reverdy's poetics and poetry, accompanied by copious examples and fine translations, should arouse the reader's interest and lead him to the study and enjoyment of Reverdy's art.

For the most part, Miss Balakian's evaluation of individual poems and poets is discerning and acute. She may be unduly kind to André Breton, but her account of the unique qualities of surrealist expression owes so much to his essays that her attitude is at least understandable. Her praise of the later work of Aragon and Eluard is not without justification, but their poetry of the 1920's would seem more deserving of critical attention. Eluard's *Capitale de la Douleur* (1926) remains one of the landmarks of modern poetry, unsurpassed by any of his later works. Miss Balakian's preferences are more than matters of taste or emphasis; in every case, her appreciation of the poetry at hand enhances the reader's understanding. I cannot help wishing, however, that her praise of surrealism did not depend on a rejection of symbolist poetry or, at the very least, a reduction of its import. As Marcel Raymond has shown in his pioneering work, *De Baudelaire au Surréalisme*, the filiation from symbolism to surrealism marks the main line of development of modern French poetry. It will not do to argue that while symbolist poetry (presumably the poetry of Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry) was abstract, surrealist poetry was concrete. The antithesis: *symbolist-surrealist* will not survive critical scrutiny. Miss Balakian explains the weaknesses she finds in Reverdy's poetry "by a relapse into symbolist technique" (p. 84), but this does less than justice to any of the poets concerned. In her final paragraphs she seeks to attenuate her belligerence towards the symbolists, but the qualification comes a little late. With all due allowance for individual preferences, we should be able to read and enjoy a variety of poets without feeling obliged to pit one group off against another. What the symbolists and surrealists share is far more important than what may separate them.

These are but incidental objections to a study deserving of high praise. Miss Balakian's book is unmistakably one of the few authoritative studies in English of its subject; it warrants attentive reading by anyone concerned with poetry in our time.

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Swift and Anglican Rationalism: The Religious Background of "A Tale of a Tub" by Philip Harth. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961. Pp. 171. \$5.00.

"It were much to be wished, and I do here humbly propose for an experiment, that every prince in Christendom will take seven of the deepest scholars in his dominion, and shut them up close for seven years in seven chambers, with a command to write seven ample commentaries on this comprehensive discourse."

Since Swift's day, although there has been a falling away of princes, there has been no diminution of deep scholars who have attempted to divide and then reconstruct some convincing unity to his *Tale of a Tub*. They all run the danger, of course, of that

. . . mighty Scholiast, whose unwearied pains
Made Horace dull. . .

With all these hazards, and despite a sometimes dulling earnestness, Professor Harth has, I think, contributed to a clearer understanding of the religious attitudes which Swift was attacking in the *Tale*, his sources in earlier Anglican apologists, the rhetorical modes with which he varied his use of sources, and, finally, the centrality of his attack on enthusiasm, an attack which joins the religious satire to the literary satire in the *Tale*. Mr. Harth is least convincing in his attempts to prove that Swift borrowed from Thomas Stanley's *History of Philosophy* the reductive system in which air is made the principle of all things. It is a pedantic question, in fact, and his handling of the parallels weakens the credibility of other, more central considerations. He is probably too earnest, also, in his attempts to systematize and codify all of the religious arguments which Swift manipulates in the *Tale*.

But he does make his point that Swift, in the religious satire, was allying himself with a particular minority group of Anglican apologists. Mr. Harth denominates the group as "Anglican rationalists" and identifies its members as Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, George Rust, and Henry Hallywell (i. e., the Cambridge Platonists), Edward Stillingfleet and John Tillotson (Latitudinarians), and Joseph Glanvill, who was sometimes one thing and sometimes another. No one, I think, would object to his proposition that the backgrounds of the religious satire may be distinguished from those of the satire on learning in the *Tale*, nor does he leave much doubt that the "gross corruptions in Religion and Learning" stem from misconceptions about the proper place of reason in man's quests in either realm. The narrowing of Mr. Harth's study to the religious aspects enables him to discover as great differences between one religious attitude and another as he does between the religious and the literary posturings to be attacked.

These distinctions are the ones which give particular value to Mr. Harth's study. The distinctions are of three kinds: in the groups to be attacked, in the logical arguments for the attack on each group, and in the rhetorical trappings appropriate for each attack. Within the sections of the *Tale* which satirize religious attitudes, he distinguishes between attacks on Catholics and attacks on dissenters, and between those on believers and those on atheists, making such distinctions on the basis of concepts central to each. Only after he has established the logical bases, does he make his case for the particular mode of attack

on each, for the choice of narrative and the quality of the narrative in each section.

He finds, in his pursuit of sources, that Swift makes use of just those arguments from Hooker and just those concepts of Descartes that More and his followers used. But Swift's use of them, his rhetorical choices, are new with him. As the "rationalists" had modified Hooker's arguments to fit times dominated by Hobbes, so Swift changed the application of their ideas to suit his period, when the threats to the Church were not so much disruption of the established order as threats of dissent and of atheism. Mr. Harth finds Swift's chief originality in the expansion and devastatingly derogatory application of ideas already current among apologists for the Church of England, transforming "static and humorless invectives" into dramatic disclosures and laughable behavior.

The sources that Mr. Harth considers are not as remote as those cited by Ronald Paulson in his study, *Theme and Structure in Swift's "Tale of a Tub,"* nor are they as general as those Mr. Landa suggests in his study of the sermons. The sources established by Mr. Harth have in them, it seems to me, a clearer pattern of abstract argument and one which Swift might well have discovered when his reading for the ministry "was fresh in his head."

Mr. Harth's attack on the problem of sources is a basic one, I should say. Only after some such investigation can one move on to what is perennially more attractive—the power and shape of Swift's words.

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Politics in the Poetry of Coleridge by Carl R. Woodring. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1961. Pp. xi + 270. \$6.00.

In the past ten years, interest in Coleridge the poet, as distinct from Coleridge the critic and aesthete, has begun to assume the proportions of a major reassessment—prompted by the new editions of Coleridge's notebooks, letters, and other prose writings issuing in ever-increasing number and by reaction to both the relative neglect which most of the poetry has suffered since its heyday with the late Victorians and the wrong turn which much of the criticism of the poetry has taken in the decades following Lowes's influential book. Professor Woodring's study of the ways in which political forces act in Coleridge's poetry is a welcome addition to this "new wave" of Coleridgean books. By concentrating on the poems which flowed from Coleridge's pen, good and bad, year in and year out, for over thirty years, and using the sporadically issued essays of *The Watchman*, *The Friend*, and the *Morning Post* as corroborative documents, Woodring shows convincingly that Coleridge was more vitally and consistently concerned with the domestic and foreign politics of his day, morally and emotionally "committed" to writing poems of protest, than a cursory reading of the *Collected Poetical Works* might indicate. Such concentration on politics in the poetry enriches biographically and critically our knowledge of the impulses motivating Coleridge the poet.

To accuse Coleridge of political apostasy, as some of his contemporaries delighted in doing, is to simplify the facts to the point of distortion. In many

ways, his political inconsistencies are those of an age which saw liberals, blinded by the theories of Malthus and Adam Smith, sincerely obstructing social legislation. If Coleridge eventually opposed Utilitarian reform of the government, yet he did not let this conservatism influence his approval of bills alleviating the iniquities of slavery, poverty, and child labor. As Woodring indicates, even Coleridge's early republicanism rarely exhibited the simple responses of the uncomplicated radical mind. Coleridge never gave whole-hearted allegiance to the social contract theories of the French *philosophes*. He grounded his libertarianism and communism, not on Jacobin concepts of equal rights and rational necessitarianism, but on romantic sentiment and pity for the oppressed; and he carried on a "twenty-year defense of the affections against Godwin" (p. 218), stressing domestic sympathy as the basis of public benevolence. After a first chapter resumé of Coleridge's political views, Woodring examines his "language of politics," finding that "Coleridge's poems do not provide handbook or dictionary of the political catchwords then common to verse and prose. No social contract, no general will, no natural goodness, no rights of man—at least not in their ordinary dress" (pp. 37-38). Although his early republicanism led him to treat as synonymous the words *despot*, *tyrant*, *monarch*, and *king*, Coleridge habitually favored the more politically neutral word over the explosively emotional one, *Freedom* over *Liberty*. The implications seem clear. Except possibly for some shrill tocsins against tyranny from 1793 to 1796, Coleridge was never the unequivocal radical. After the Pantisocratic scheme of escaping from (not purging) corrupted England had collapsed, he showed more heat in maintaining fruitful opposition to reactionary Ministries than in toppling King and Court. And while he continued constant in his hatred of oppression and war, as early as 1798 his poetic references to sovereignty had become "generally commonplace or indifferently confused" (p. 43). The "hesitant republican" and Whig political reformer of the 1790's clearly foreshadows the philosophical pundit and "independent Tory" social reformer of the 1810's and 1820's.

In separate chapters, Woodring then considers the poems expressive of the Pantisocratic dream; the newspaper sonnets of 1794-95; the "looser poems of praise" such as "Ode to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire" and the poems addressed to "Perdita" Robinson; the "pop-ups," "squibs" and "jeux d'esprit" written for "Pay and Party" (e. g., "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," "The Raven," "Parliamentary Oscillators," "The Devil's Thoughts"); the "Poems of Elevation" ("Religious Musings," "The Destiny of Nations," "Ode on the Departing Year," "France: An Ode," "Fears in Solitude"); and the plays *Osorio* and *Zapolya*. As was inevitable, Woodring deals, for the most part, with the poems of the 1790's. He carefully sifts all the poetry for political inferences, but the finds become meager and tenuous as he pursues Coleridge into middle and old age. Riches abound, however, in his examination of the early verse. Particularly illuminating are the discussions of "The Raven," "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," "Recantation: Illustrated in the Story of the Mad Ox," and the diffuse poems "Religious Musings" and "Ode on the Departing Year." These are poems rarely accorded aesthetic scrutiny. Woodring places them in both their literary and historical contexts, showing how Coleridge's response to political events supplies the world created by these poems with its syntax and form. Woodring's political approach wins for these poems a respectability that they probably have not had since their first appearance in print. Such success

argues strongly for his concentration on the politics in them. Also praiseworthy is Woodring's skill in unearthing allusions to Pitt in the poems. Because Coleridge exercised caution (these were dangerous years for a political satirist) as well as moderation in his indictment of his country's domestic and foreign policies, not all the political implications in his verse are readily apparent; and this book has done us a service in explicating them. Also, because politics assumed a more or less pervasive importance in his experience, prompting him to interject political commentary into poems on explicitly non-political themes, the political explication is doubly welcome.

To guard against the impression that the political wholly dominates much of the poetry, Woodring reminds the reader more than once that Coleridge's "deepest being was not absorbed in politics" (p. 34). He points out that "By early 1796 national and international politics . . . had secured a place next below the throne of religion in Coleridge's mind" (p. 21). But his concentrated assault on the politics in Coleridge's poetry tends occasionally to offset these sane and balanced observations, much as Lowes's brilliant source-hunting tended to offset his assurances that his discoveries were not in the final analysis a key to the workings of "The Ancient Mariner." This is to say that Coleridgeans will disagree with the political emphasis put on this or that poem, for Woodring has not written with a namby-pamby desire to serve up pap suitable for all stomachs. Some of my own reservations would include the following. In "Youth and Age," is not the retention of "Liberty" in the line "Beauty, Truth, and Liberty" when revised to "Friendship, Love, and Liberty" dictated as much by the theme of the physical and mental restrictions instituted by time and advancing age as by residual considerations of political freedom? Are not the origins of *Osorio* as much psychological as political, "its background" as much Coleridge's guiltily ambivalent *rapprochement* with the world as his "anti-Ministerial journalism" (p. 206)? Does "Fears in Solitude" have "novel simplicity of style and structure" and "subdued articulation of . . . movement" (p. 193)? As a political statement in comparison to the hodge-podge that is "Ode on the Departing Year," yes! But as a lyrical expression of domestic love and nature *mystique* in comparison to other of the conversation poems, no! In other words the relativity of Woodring's judgment here is stronger than his words hint. And I agree with Collier (as opposed to Woodring) that "A Character" is short on dignity and long on self-pity. Stress on the political theme does add dignity to the verses. Yet when I read the lines:

Alas, poor Bird! . . .
 Or rather let us say, poor Bard!
 And henceforth quit the allegoric,

 Alas, poor Bard! no gold had he;
 Behind another's team he stept,
 And plough'd and sow'd, while others reapt;
 The work was his, but theirs the glory,
Sic vos non vobis, his whole story, (37-46)

I always see not Coleridge but S. T. C. dropping the allegory to think of himself in the context of all his past actions as not another tomtit journalist but an

archetypal Bard, and offering not only his poverty as proof of his political independence but also pleading his seminal influence on others as an apologetics for his apparent nonproductivity.

But these are quibbles, many involving the arbitrary matter of taste. In calling much needed attention to the role politics played in Coleridge's poetic impulse, Woodring has simultaneously paid tribute to the spaciousness of Coleridge's mind and given us a perceptive and seminal work. He has produced fresh readings of poems and plays and suggested fruitful lines of inquiry which should keep critics busy for years. He has written what will be long the standard reference for students of the politics in the poetry of Coleridge.

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The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius by John D. Rosenberg.

New York: Columbia University Press, 1961. Pp. xiv + 274. \$5.00.

Although there has been some academic revival of interest in John Ruskin during the last decade or so, he remains a writer who is virtually unread outside the classroom. The fact may be regretted, but it is hardly surprising, for Ruskin offers his readers formidable difficulties. How are we to judge him? His historical interest is unquestionable, as an influence in his own time and later: an influence on Morris, Proust, Shaw, Gandhi, Frank Lloyd Wright, and, no doubt, other great men. But historically important writers are not necessarily relevant to our interests now, not necessarily the ones we want to read. For all of his considerable influence on our own ideas about the originality and social expressiveness of art, about the functional honesty of architecture, Ruskin cannot be taken as a reliable art historian or a particularly useful art critic. He predicted much of the economic and social planning of this century, but he can hardly be read now as an economist or a social planner. An important figure in English literature, Ruskin can write magnificently in passages and parts; yet he never produced a satisfactory whole work, with the possible exception of the condensed and moving sermon *Unto This Last*. John Rosenberg suggests that although "the vice and virtue" of his wide-ranging intellect "makes chaos of single chapters, confusion . . . of entire books," still this wild diversity composes into the unified whole of Ruskin's opus. Yes, but few of us will persevere through that vast opus: the standard Cook and Wedderburn edition runs to thirty-eight stout volumes, excluding the stout and splendid index.

This very reaction to him, "Yes, but," is the reaction to a conflict or a number of conflicts within his work: the conflict, especially, between his love of beauty and his self-denying moral code. His writing pontificates, digresses, reiterates—Rosenberg wisely observes that if Ruskin had been surer of himself he might have been much briefer—and pretends to impose a logic or eternally valid order on his impulses, just as it interprets his taste in moral dicta. The first task of Mr. Rosenberg has been to define the consistency of his life work, within which there is so much that seems false or inconsistent. And this he has done extremely well. He shows that ultimately, for Ruskin, a deeper moral sense and a broader

sense of beauty did not have to be in conflict but could reinforce each other—even if the moral sense was finally the dominant.

This book, appropriately sub-titled "A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius," is neither strict biography nor strict literary criticism, but a sympathetic picturing of Ruskin's mental and emotional development. The term *genius* carries its two meanings of inherent nature and extraordinary power, of integrity and greatness. For, if his life appears pathetic, broken, perhaps finally tragic, if he wrote no single consistently great book, if his desired effect on society had to be long-delayed, Ruskin was nevertheless a very great man.

In his proper concern to emphasize the greatness of the man, Mr. Rosenberg is sometimes too unwilling to criticize his flaws. When he justifies Ruskin's fusing of art and morality by a reference to the "esthete" as "the philistine up-ended," the one rejecting moral responsibility and the other rejecting beauty, he misses the point that first, Ruskin's early strictures on morality were often nothing but evangelical-prudish, and, second, "art for art's sake" in England came not in spite but largely because of Ruskin, as a reaction to his encouraging art for the sake of literary, scientific or ethical purposes which it served badly. But on the whole, even with his hysteria about Whistler and his spells of madness, Ruskin grew more honest as he grew older, honest enough to see some of his own flaws and reject some of his earlier intolerance, narrowness, and excessive dogmatism; here, the contrast with his "master" Carlyle, who lacked the disciple's love for ordinary weak men and who grew more shrill and bitter with age, may be instructive. Ruskin matured from a fierce and fairly ignorant partisan of Turner's art (Turner needed no defence, as Lady Eastlake acidly commented) and an insular protestant, into a scholar with a reasonably catholic taste who could praise the human life in Veronese. He could, moreover, make the quite truly heroic gesture of rejecting not only his mother's widely held puritanism but also his father's all but universally held whiggish views, for the sake of human lives in Victorian England.

More than any earlier study, Mr. Rosenberg's book reveals such virtues, reveals the man's final integrity, for readers who may be irritated by Ruskin's prejudices and his limitations; and it clarifies his method as well as his moods, for readers who may despair of finding their way in Ruskin's digressive prose. This learned, sympathetic, and remarkably well-written portrait allows us to see outlined a great life which *is* an opus, a darkly splendid work, and to read the finer fragments of the whole—some of *Modern Painters*, much of *The Stones of Venice*, *Unto This Last*, the unfinished *Praeterita*—with fuller understanding and more just admiration.

Without providing very much close criticism of individual works such as these, Mr. Rosenberg gives us the framework within which critical endeavors can be made. Most important, perhaps, he gives us some reason for thinking Ruskin's failures and successes worth our critical attention. He suggests that Ruskin can still be relevant because, at his greatest, he communicates and celebrates a passionate vision of life in landscape and in art; he communicates and celebrates a passionate concern for life in human beings and their societies. We may not agree that pictures should be read as poems or as books, that art has to show or tell only what is visually or literally given in raw nature, that ornament is the prime interest of architecture, that social justice can be achieved best in an autocratic state with a Carlylean hero as autocrat, or many of the other

doctrines associated with the Victorian prophet. But, whatever our views of his art theory and his social theory, his quality of vision and his deeply moral concerns are continually important. His eloquent and urgent voice has still to be heard and considered.

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The House that James Built and Other Literary Studies by Robert W. Stallman.

East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1961. Pp. xii + 254. \$5.00.

R. W. Stallman's *The House that James Built* consists of fourteen close studies of novels by James, Hardy, Crane, Conrad, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner; it also includes two more general discussions: "The New Critics" and "Fiction and Its Critics." Five studies are published here for the first time; the others were first printed in various periodicals (three in *Modern Fiction Studies*) for the most part in the past seven years. Indebted to the New Critics—and to G. Wilson Knight's Shakespearean studies in particular—for his approach, he applies to modern fiction a "cryptographic" mode of criticism. (Mr. Stallman also refers to his method as "harpooning.") His purpose is "mainly to illuminate the given work's hidden world, the substructure of multiple interrelationships of images and leit-motifs cryptographically cross-referenced and thus concealed" (p. viii). Stallman explains his title thus: "What my punning title . . . intends is that James, both by his canon of art as by his example in fiction, influenced subsequent architects of modern fiction and built thus more houses than his own" (p. ix).

Mr. Stallman's method, then, is to hunt down all related images or allusions that crisscross a novel until he can detect a pattern. The explications that result are often enlightening, sometimes dismaying. Three articles, it seems to me, make the novels they discuss take on new dimension; they demonstrate that this kind of explication, at its best, can result in a criticism that enhances. "Gatsby and the Hole in Time" and "Time and *The Secret Agent*" collate the references made to time in the two novels with illuminating results. "Hardy's Hour-Glass Novel" (1947), one of the best of these studies, examines structure rather than image; written earlier than the others, it seems less under the influence of Knight. "*The Return of the Native* resolves itself structurally into a mechanical concatenation of seven hour-glass plots" (p. 56). By tracing the geometry of Hardy's work, Stallman sheds light on Hardy's deterministic outlook. In addition to these three, his essay on *Maggie* performs a valuable service by stressing the artistic qualities of this traditionally underrated work.

In pursuit of detail, Stallman sometimes misses the larger meanings of a novel. In his surprisingly wrong-headed essay on *The Sun Also Rises*, he sees Robert Cohn as the true hero, the only gentleman in the book, the one who embodies moral virtue, in contrast to Jake Barnes and his friends with their "sophomoric" code. To believe this is Mr. Stallman's privilege, so long as he does not try to pass this idea off as Hemingway's, as he does try to do. He here ignores the novelist's obvious intention: the traditional code Hemingway respects is embodied in Romero, the bullfighter; Stallman ignores Cohn's brutal attack on Romero.

There is an "Unintentional Fallacy" as well as an Intentional Fallacy that a critic must beware of. Furthermore, commenting on Hemingway's Frederick Henry, he states that Henry "descends toward moral and spiritual degeneration." Most readers of *A Farewell to Arms*, on the other hand, would agree that, although the novel ends nihilistically, Henry rises out of his initial slough in his search for truth and value. Stallman's interpretation of Isabel Archer, of *Portrait of a Lady*, as being as cold, arrogant, and selfish as Gilbert Osmond—a point he stresses—seems another misreading. If she were so, how could she win the admiration of Touchett and Goodwood? For a more accurate reading, one can turn to Dorothy van Ghent.

His explications sometimes suffer from his not viewing a work in larger perspective. His study of *Tender is the Night* seems an accurate reading, but, for all its ingenious weaving of motifs and images, it does not say as much about the work as, say, Edwin Fussell's less microscopic "Fitzgerald's Brave New World" (in the collection *The Great Gatsby: A Study*, ed. F. J. Hoffman, New York, 1962).

"The New Critics" is an exposition of the attitudes of Mr. Stallman's critical gods; "Fiction and Its Critics" is an angry, at times ill-tempered, attack against those who have criticized him in the past. One fault that cannot be overlooked is that the prose style sometimes lacks finesse and is full of derivative jargon. And in his relentless search for evidence, the author has not placed a premium on readability.

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