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Book Reviews

Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe by Douglas Cole. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1962. Pp. x + 274. \$6.00.

Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order by Irving Ribner. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962. Pp. xii + 179. \$4.50.

The first of these books focuses on the only poet of the age who might have rivaled Shakespeare, with whom he shared the traditional Elizabethan world view predicated on order and man's moral responsibility, although Marlowe refracted that world view in ways peculiar to himself. The other deals with a selected group of dramatists who show the majestic affirmations of Christian humanism vitiated by loss of faith in human dignity, so that in their work the traditional world view is fragmented rather than refracted.

Cole's introductory chapter on the backgrounds of Marlovian tragedy consists of sketchy sections on the medieval mystery cycles, the morality plays, non-dramatic *De Casibus* tragedy, Senecan tragedy, and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. The discussion of these topics leans heavily on Bernard Spivack's *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil*, Willard Farnham's *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy*, and the work on Senecan tragedy of J. W. Cunliffe, F. L. Lucas, and T. S. Eliot. It is useful, however, to have the handling of suffering and evil in these various traditions looked at together. *The Spanish Tragedy* points backward and forward. Kyd turned into "concrete stage business" the themes that had formerly been merely rhetorical or declamatory. Thus the materials for English tragedy awaited Marlowe in abundance and diversity.

In *Dido Queen of Carthage* the Virgilian matter is manipulated in an Ovidian manner by increasing the tragic consequences of love (Anna and Iarbas) and adding a comic dimension (Jupiter and the Nurse). Cole detects an ironic morality in this, but it seems more akin to Marlowe's sly mockery in *Hero and Leander*. The examination of *Tamburlaine* avoids both the romantic-biographical interpretation, which identifies Tamburlaine's superhuman ambition and iconoclasm as Marlowe's, and the severely didactic interpretation, which finds the play a Christian condemnation of overweening cruelty. In Part I Tamburlaine's victims provide a veritable procession of *De Casibus* tragedies, but the blood-stained conqueror stands triumphant and immune, a paradox not resolved until in Part II, precisely at the height of his "physical and spiritual audacity," mortality overtakes him. Marlowe's assertion of moral order is delayed and remains implicit.

The Jew of Malta and *The Massacre at Paris* are simplistic in their two incarnations of evil. Barabas has three aspects—as Jew, as Machiavel, as morality Vice—governed by dramatic tradition. For the affinities of Barabas with the Vice we are indebted to Spivack again rather than Cole. The criticism of Christianity is dramatic, not subjective; moreover, "it is the betrayal of Christianity and not Christianity itself that is scorned." At the end Barabas is dead but his vices live on in the victorious Christians, a resolution "more deeply satirical

than homiletic." Perhaps so, if we can forget the melodramatic justice done the wretch in the cauldron. The Duke of Guise is a Catholic and political Machiavel in Marlowe's most lurid play. Paul Kocher has demonstrated that it is based on contemporary French and English pamphlets. This kind of history play never attracted Shakespeare, and Marlowe is not concerned with the nature of the state, the problem of political order, or the universality of the political evils he displays. "Suffering and evil in *The Massacre at Paris* emerge finally as tools manipulated for propaganda purposes"—Protestant propaganda. Barabas and the Duke of Guise are consummate villains that an Elizabethan audience, notwithstanding any modern confusion of hideousness with heroism, would not have admired.

Edward II is the first English history play which is at the same time a personal tragedy, one which by its unrelenting portrayal of Edward's psychological as well as physical suffering gives a new dramatic force to the *De Casibus* theme. It is hard to accept the interpretation that in the aberrant king's pitiful fall Marlowe "is working for irony, not sympathy, in the depiction of his protagonist's suffering." If this is not inconsistent with the conclusion that the play presents "a view of suffering and evil that is basically moral and traditional," it does contravene the impression made by the final scene on Charles Lamb and most others. What comes across so powerfully is the manifest pathos and horror of Edward's degradation and death, not a subtle undercutting of these effects before the scream of the murdered man rang through the theater, and as it did "through the castle and town of Berkeley," as Holinshed writes.

Doctor Faustus represents the culmination of "the irony with which Marlowe habitually invests the downfalls of his protagonists." This irony is based, first, on the conception of *poena damni* as formulated by the early Church Fathers and by scholastic theologians, for in his desire to play God, Faustus repeatedly makes deliberate choices which separate him from God. Cole has discovered that certain writings on the doctrine of *poena damni* were available to Marlowe in the library of Corpus Christi College, which is worth knowing, but he labors the obvious insisting that the play is more theologically sophisticated than the *Faust-Book*. The irony is based, second, on what every commentator has noticed, the incongruity between Faustus's dreams of omnipotence and the emptiness of his actual accomplishments. This central irony is enforced by the frequently condemned scenes of low comedy, which are thus artistically justified. Marlowe's vision of spiritual suffering and theological evil in *Doctor Faustus* differs from the tragic statements of earlier works in the Senecan and *De Casibus* traditions, and nothing in it beyond a thematic precedent stems from the morality tradition, as Cole makes clear.

The persistent features of Marlovian tragedy are the sense of personal loss, the irony of human aspiration and waste, the responsibility of man for suffering and evil. In Cole's view Marlowe is first and last a tragic ironist, a reading that reflects the reevaluation of Elizabethan literature in accordance with the predilections of modern criticism. This book will stimulate further reassessment of Marlowe's art, perhaps especially when one disagrees with it, and it is therefore valuable.

Ribner's book is a product of mature scholarship, a companion to his *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy*. It explores the efforts of Shakespeare's successors to

find moral order in the face of increasing disillusionment. Standing with Una M. Ellis-Fermor's *Jacobean Tragedy*, M. C. Bradbrook's *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy*, F. P. Wilson's *Elizabethan and Jacobean*, and its own contemporary, Robert Ornstein's *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, it conducts us on an illuminating excursion into a dark world. Ribner's searchlight is aimed only at what he wants us to see, but his documentation lets us know that others have seen by different lights; he carefully indicates wherein he agrees and disagrees with other critics, and why. This is the most useful kind of scholarly and critical writing.

The introduction gives a preview of the separate chapters to follow on Chapman, Heywood, Tourneur, Webster, Middleton, and Ford. With the exception of Heywood, the conservative adherent of a crumbling Christian humanism, these dramatists were trying to find, in various ways, "a basis for morality . . . some meaning in human suffering, some kind of affirmation which can make life possible in a world which seems to give reason only for despair." The final reconciliation of Shakespearian tragedy no longer sufficed. Explanations have been offered for the lapse from faith into doubt in the seventeenth century, when the skeptical strain in Renaissance thought became acute; Ribner is not concerned with causes but with effects. The introduction also justifies the omission of Marston, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Shirley on grounds that appear inadequate. It is especially regrettable that the searchlight was not turned on Marston.

Another self-imposed limitation is the consideration of only two plays by each dramatist. The pairing yields many insights, but a suspicion arises that it may make a case too neatly. The plays are judiciously selected, however, so this complaint is really a wish that the study were more comprehensive.

Juxtaposition of the early *Bussy D'Ambois* and the late *Tragedy of Chabot* enables Ribner to show that Chapman's bleak stoicism is complexly symbolic. The main tendency of Renaissance drama is symbolic rather than naturalistic, from which it follows that modern realistic staging of Shakespeare and his fellow-dramatists is fatuous. Bussy functions "as symbol of ordinary man and as symbol of prelapsarian perfection." Neither his humanity nor his magnificence can save him from corruption when he enters the society of men, and he dies knowing the evil he has come to share. Chabot loses the faith in ideal justice by which he had lived, learning the inevitable imperfection of human justice in an imperfect world. Chapman's tragic statement remains murky behind his didactic philosophizing despite this valiant elucidation.

Heywood continued to affirm the Elizabethan confidence in cosmic order. Like most critics, Ribner is lukewarm toward *A Woman Killed With Kindness*. He might have argued that the intensely emotional morality of its private world attains a universal dimension, but he undertakes instead the more difficult defense of the explicit relation between private and public morality in *The Rape of Lucrece*, "a pedestrian imitation of *Macbeth*" at best.

If Heywood is a survival of Renaissance humanism watered down by bourgeois homiletics, Tourneur is a throwback to the "pessimistic Christianity inherent in a large segment of medieval thought." Tourneur's view of man's depravity is placed in the tradition of *contemptus mundi*. *The Revenger's Tragedy* becomes a series of exaggerated *exempla* illustrating that man proposes but God disposes, "a symbolic work of art in the medieval mode." *The Atheist's Tragedy*, accepted

here as Tourneur's, is also medieval in its *débat*-like refutation of D'Amville's heretical belief in the supremacy of nature without divine supervision. It might be suggested that in method as well as argument this play recalls Spenser's *Mutability Cantos*, a significant relationship in view of Tourneur's imitation of Spenserian allegory in *The Transformed Metamorphosis*. In any event, the two plays examined together here make a similar moral statement.

Although he admits the darkness of Webster's tragic world in *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ribner denies that the dramatist's philosophy is one of despair. He maintains that Vittoria in the earlier play, as evil as she is beautiful, yet "stands for life, as her brother, Flamineo, stands for death," and her courage and defiance create a pride in humanity. If this seems paradoxical, it is put more affirmatively in the later play. The Duchess "in her heroic opposition to her brothers is the symbol of life, as they are symbols of death," and "Webster's final statement is that life may have nobility in spite of all." Bosola, despite the implausibility of his transformation, is regenerated in death by the fact of human dignity. The importance of Antonio in the design of the play is emphasized, for he symbolizes the ability of man to endure, and this is what Webster celebrates. A kind of desperate faith pierces the encircling gloom.

In Middleton we reach depths without redemption. Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling* is stripped of her pretense of virtue and forced to embrace her damnation in De Flores. The subplot provides in Isabella, proof against temptation, a moral foil to Beatrice-Joanna (a thematic connection comparable to that between main plot and subplot in Heywood's *A Woman Killed With Kindness*), but Ribner forgets that this alleviation must be credited to Middleton's collaborator, William Rowley. *Women Beware Women* is a picture of utter depravity. The play's widely recognized artistic defects are defended as necessary to its vision of universal damnation. A vein of ritual technique is discerned in the midst of sordid realism. More convincing is the demonstration that iterative imagery of commercial exchange and gluttonous feeding contributes to the central theme, although one is left wondering about the real significance of this in view of L. C. Knights' cogent observations on Middleton's use of language in *Drama & Society in the Age of Jonson*, pp. 256-69.

It is surprising to hear that Ford is set apart from his contemporaries by "an inability to lead his audience to a full resolution of the moral problems which he poses." Do any of the other dramatists dealt with here, except Heywood, offer a full resolution? The sad quietude of *The Broken Heart* seems to mean that life's conflicting demands leave calm courage in suffering and death as the highest and only virtue. Moral inertia ensues. The play suffers, in Ribner's view, from its adherence to the artificial social codes of Beaumont and Fletcher, but this air of unreality is overcome in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Giovanni and Annabella, the god-like but incestuous lovers, can not accept their world, and their sordid world will not accept them. To live in the world, man "has no alternative but a blind conformity" to a moral order sunk in uncertainty. Belief in anything outside oneself is impossible. Ford emerges as something of an existentialist.

Although this book may be charged with saying both too much and too little about its subject, it is a revealing confrontation of the change from an Elizabethan world picture of certitude to a Jacobean and Caroline world picture full

of insecurity. Marlowe anticipates later attitudes, as Heywood recalls an earlier set of values. The quest of Jacobean tragedy for moral order is shown to be a fact, and Ribner studies it closely; he does not pretend that to seek is to find. There was no return to the position of Spenser and Shakespeare.

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John Donne's Lyrics: The Eloquence of Action by Arnold Stein. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1962. Pp. 244. \$5.00.

Early in his book, Mr. Stein remarks, "A book on Donne cannot be simple. It certainly cannot be complete." Mr. Stein's own intentions are complex. He is primarily concerned with the criticism of Donne's lyrics (and his chief emphasis is on the secular rather than the religious lyrics), but he also attempts to evaluate, adjust, and reconcile the differing judgments of twentieth-century critics and scholars about Donne. He is further concerned with Donne's ideas and with Donne's creative influence on modern poetry. It is almost inevitable, then, that the book should show Mr. Stein's interest in general problems of criticism and literary judgment. But Mr. Stein is interested in philosophy beyond aesthetics: he cites Plotinus and Whitehead (among others) fairly frequently, and he attempts to demonstrate that Donne was, and the modern reader should be, seriously engaged with significant philosophical issues. The book is, then, fairly "difficult." It should, I think, be of interest to readers particularly concerned with critical theory and the history of modern criticism. How helpful others will find the book may depend on how much they have read in Donne and the criticism of Donne. For the group (and one suspects that it is large) who have read the criticism more carefully than they have read Donne's poems, this book may prove to be a revelation.

Mr. Stein's book contains an introduction, three major chapters ("Questions of Style," "Forms of Wit," and "The Burden of Consciousness"), a postscript ("On Donne's Modern Career"), and two appendices ("The Stanza of 'Lovers Infinity,'" and "Notes on Donne's Religious Thought"). His subtitle is taken from a passage which Coleridge noted in Donne's sermons ("The eloquence of Inferiors is in words, the eloquence of Superiors is in action"), and in his opening pages Mr. Stein goes so far as to say, "In his best poems Donne aspires to the eloquence of action and never to the eloquence of words." But "The Burden of Consciousness," the title of the third chapter, might have provided a more immediately enlightening subtitle for the emphasis of the entire study: "no other lyric poet has used the subject of his own mind so consistently as an object"; "the mind of the poet is at once engaged in its imagining and detached in its knowledge of what it is doing: it is both beholder and partaker as it acts and contemplates itself acting"; "the other side of Donne's drive for consciousness . . . is the longing to escape from its burden"; "a balanced view of Donne's constitution as a poet requires recognizing his capacity for intense and simple feeling, and his deep desire, though it is not continuous or systematic, to resolve the problems of consciousness."

Mr. Stein shares in what he perceives as Donne's "burden" and his desires. Eminently conscious himself of critical and scholarly quarrels, he can easily think of what may be justly said in opposition to almost any generalization. This "consciousness" sometimes leads him to qualifications so fine-spun that the reader may find it difficult to follow his argument. But he is also extremely conscious of the reader and of his own method: "these are matters that, in my judgment, respond less well to a direct systematic attack than to a gradual and indirect process of clarification. . . . I must exercise critical patience by not fully engaging problems before they have ripened in relationship to each other"; "some of these details may seem strained"; "it is hard to resist working too much"; "the distinction I am trying to make"; "no interpreter of Donne, however sympathetic, can escape occasional difficulties in maintaining his own accepted role as beholder and partaker of the experiences presented—even when, in certain poems, he knows that he should know better than to lose his balance." He seems to "start" again and again. He tells the reader constantly what he is going to do and what he has tried to do. This can become distracting and tiresome—although, as in his summary of "Questions of Style," it can also result in some of his finest pages.

But the other side of Stein's "consciousness" may be represented by the fact that frequently he makes aphoristic formulations which are accurate, elegant, and important: the danger for the literary historian is that "in his proprietary zeal he may reconstruct a monument which can be entered only by his permission. But we do not therefore need to accept an opposite extreme and make of the past a graven image of ourselves and our own immediate concerns." "It is a false hope, in criticism and elsewhere, that our good instruments and techniques can be trusted to think for us." "We may infer that Donne uses the old patterns of the mind's experiences as other poets use myths, to be built upon, varied, and revealed by art." "Every poem is not a full-scale effort to reconcile extremes." "Donne is not poet of mysticism or ecstasy . . . ; as a religious poet he is distinguished not by success but by significant failure, not by the desired triumph of arrival but by the moving struggle to arrive." On the general problem of "advances" in scholarly and critical knowledge, Mr. Stein remarks, "not seldom what we learn is why what is no longer defended was indefensible." He is sensible on the creative influence of any poet: "no poet, as poet, is going to devote his working life to the disciplined study of a great predecessor": "new disciples bring changes, and no disciples bring oblivion." His summary of Donne's influence and reputation in the twentieth-century seems to me first-rate: "no poet could have long supported all of the claims, all of the demands, made in the name of Donne"; "the chief lesson to modern poets was the demonstration of self-consciousness, not as any enemy to imaginative creation but as a potential ally"; "the rich example of his uses of imagery fascinated our century and helped the better poets write better and the worse poets worse"; "perhaps the future will say that what cost him most dearly in the 1950's was his neglect of myth, without which no poet could deeply interest the mythic-minded readers of that age."

Despite general positions which are sensible and enlightened, Mr. Stein's treatment of individual poems and points occasionally seems odd or mistaken. One of Mr. Stein's major virtues as a reader is that he pays attention to sound and

metrical patterns; and he knows too much about seventeenth-century poetry to believe that any number of recordings by readers ignorant of the poet's tradition and individual practice can tell us anything interesting about how the poem should be read. It is discouraging, then, to have a passage in skillful trisyllabics from "The Dry Salvages" cited as an example, close to Wyatt and Donne, of "accentual verse" "where unstressed syllables expand the structure": one would have thought Dryden and Swinburne might be more to the point. It is even more discouraging to find on two occasions that Stein explores the possibility that "the ear" may try to "solve problems" with lines of Elegy X by a "stress shift in the fifth foot." It is true that Stein finally opts for "a final and most complicated possibility, a spondee in the last foot"; but this is, of course, obvious, sensible, and thoroughly traditional. What one cannot understand is why time was wasted considering the impossible alternative in Donne of an unstressed tenth syllable. In discussing the same poem, Stein lets his desire that no possible complexity should escape him get the better of him when he discovers "a buried syntactical ambiguity" in the line, "Makes mee her *Medall*, and makes her love me": "'love' may be not a verb but a noun parallel to 'Medall.'" But the ambiguity is impossible if one bothers to read the next line, "As Kings do coynes, to which their stamps impart / The value." "Love" must be a verb if we grant that the lines make grammatical sense.

But these are minor matters. More serious, I believe, is Mr. Stein's frequently excessive emphasis on philosophical meaning. "The Good Morrow" almost sinks under thirteen pages of elaborate analysis. Of that poem, Stein remarks, "if we solemnly expect a literal use of the Platonic distinctions, then we may be justified in thinking Donne mischievous. But we are not required to take the philosophical part as both central and seriously literal." But how many readers of Donne have ever thought of approaching that poem with such expectations? Is it really likely that, when reading "The Undertaking," "we may perhaps guess that Donne is having some philosophical fun, and demonstrating that human thought leads to no transcendent unmoved mover, but heads the other way, toward the immersion of self in the generation of inferior images"? Is the poem really "demonstrating" all that? On some famous lines from "Loves Growth" ("And yet no greater, but more eminent, / Love by the Spring is growne"), Mr. Stein remarks, "the increase is part of the inevitable illusion of appearances, the illusion, we may interpolate, that the life of action reveals when measured from the perspective of eternity." At such moments, Mr. Stein seems to be a reader for whom the abstract generalization has more reality than the specific instance; and one feels that a good deal of Donne gets lost.

Nevertheless, as my earlier extensive quotations indicate, Mr. Stein says a great deal that needed to be said. It is good to be reminded that we should "distrust the arbitrary assignment of Donne to a school of rhetorical poetry in which verses stand by sense alone and are to be read but never sung." While one could quarrel about details, his classification of "The Forms of Wit" in Donne's poetry ("epigrammatic reversal," "inversions," "binary forms," "ternary forms") helpfully focuses attention on the ways in which argument and attitude give shape to the poems. For its treatment of Donne's lyrics in general, this book takes its place with those by Robert Ellrod, Frank Kermode, J. B. Leishman, and Leonard Unger, as one of the most important studies published

recently. It seems unlikely that anyone will attempt another such study until Miss Helen Gardner completes her edition of the poems and gives us new information about the development of Donne's mind and his craft.

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John Dryden's Imagery by Arthur W. Hoffman. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962. Pp. xi + 172. \$5.00.

John Dryden is faring very well indeed these days, with a four-volume edition of his poetry, a multi-volume edition of his works in progress, an entire book devoted to *Absalom and Achitophel*, to mention what comes most readily to mind, and now a book on his imagery. To be sure, Professor Hoffman does not study all the poetry in his examination of Dryden's imagery, restricting himself to some of the early laudatory poetry, the prologues and epilogues, *Religio Laici*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, *To Mr. Oldham* and *To Anne Killigrew*, and the poems to Congreve and the Duchess of Ormond. The first and most immediate objection is to the decision to omit any consideration of the plays, already fruitful objects for this sort of exercise at the hands of Moody Prior and D. W. Jefferson. I cannot myself, in the absence of any treatment of the plays, get the "sense of the full sweep of Dryden's poetic career" (p. xi) that Professor Hoffman hopes for, especially since the plays contain so very many more images than do the non-dramatic poems. This is especially disturbing as one chapter is set aside for *Religio Laici*, a poem which D. Nichol Smith thought to have less imagery than is usual in Dryden's poems, an observation that Professor Hoffman agrees "is certainly borne out by a study of the poem's imagery" (p. 69), justifying his inclusion of the poem, however, by stating that what imagery there is is employed in a special way. I think it a major tactical error to study imagery in poems where its appearance is sparse, when so many other poems or pieces offer far richer opportunities. Somewhat the same objection could be raised against the five pages devoted to *To Mr. Oldham*, another poem sparse in imagery (p. 97). Indeed, it is a curious procedure that hopes eventually to emerge with sound conclusions about a poet's use of imagery and yet works only with rather arbitrarily selected specimens. The conclusions, admitting only for the moment their acceptability, can obtain only for the works selected, and not, by extension, for the rest of the poetry. This is not, then, a study of Dryden's imagery; it is, rather, a study of the imagery of a rather small portion of the poetic canon of Dryden's works. Subsequent criticism of Professor Hoffman's methods and conclusions must be read against the background of this initial objection.

I suppose that I should say in all candor that I am prejudiced against imagery studies of this sort, since they extend an invitation to verbal and intellectual gymnastics that is seldom declined. Professor Hoffman's interpretations of words, lines, complete passages, and whole poems evince no slightest suspicion of the dangers of over-ingeniousness that beset the image-hunter. It is not that he too often finds images where others will not admit their existence, a common fault

of other gleaners in the field, but that he does the most astonishing things with the few he finds, piling suggestion upon suggestion, adding layer on layer of allusiveness, now making unwarranted assumptions, now diffidently advancing a hypothesis, and finally, at a great distance from his point of departure, presenting conclusions that seem to have only the faintest connection with Dryden's actual words. On many occasions, moreover, the reader is confronted with the qualifying, hedging phrase that serves as a backdoor escape route.

My other general objection to this study is that Dryden is made, in some aspects of his poetry, to appear unique where he is only one of many who were doing the same things. This appears particularly true in Professor Hoffman's remarks on the prologues and epilogues, where, I might incidentally add, he is more concerned with *what* Dryden says than *how* he says it. When one reads that Dryden "sometimes had the prologue and epilogue printed and circulated copies among his friends" (which is taken to be "an interesting indication of the importance which he attached to these poems. Furthermore, it suggests that these pieces were designed to bear closer inspection, and that the reader might be rewarded with implications beyond those which the auditor could be expected to gather" [p. 53, n. 4]), he assumes that Dryden, unlike other writers of these ephemeral pieces, wished to insure their longevity and so had them printed. That he was not the only playwright to have his prologues and epilogues printed is sufficiently attested to in Professor Autry Nell Wiley's *Rare Prologues and Epilogues, 1642-1700*, 1940, pp. xxxviii-xxxix. My point is not simply that others had their prologues and epilogues printed, but that one must not seek to find recondite reasons for Dryden's doing so. Possibly it would be well to introduce here Professor Bernard Schilling's *Dryden and the Conservative Myth: A Reading of "Absalom and Achitophel"* (1961), in the course of which some very salutary things are said about the study of poetic imagery. On pp. 8-10 Professor Schilling warns, among other things, "that the imagery in a given poem by Dryden may turn out to be like that used in all such poems written in or about his time. He may draw on a sort of poetical counter or follow general practice in using medical images for satiric effect," a warning that he thinks important enough to repeat later (pp. 86-7). Indeed, Professor Schilling uses the very same words, "poetical counter," in this last passage and once more, on the same subject, on page 241. To him, at least, the danger is a very real one. It is unfortunate that Professor Hoffman could not, as I presume he did not, have had time enough to profit by Professor Schilling's warnings.

Professor Hoffman finds that Dryden tends to draw upon classical and biblical (or Christian) sources for very much of his imagery and makes much of this fact. It strikes me, and I may be naïf here, that these are the logical and even inevitable sources of imagery for the poets of this period. When, for example, in his discussion of *To Anne Killigrew* Professor Hoffman writes that "the metaphor of Anne as Sappho reincarnate is not mere adornment, not mere idle if graceful compliment, but is of a piece with all the images in the poem that associate Anne with the classical practice or conception of poetry" (p. 104), I am tempted to ask with what other poetess he could compare her. The comparison was inevitable, and Professor Kinsley in his edition of Dryden's poems notes that Katherine Philips, for one, was accorded the same compliment (p. 1966). And when, for another example, Professor Hoffman sees Dryden in

Astrea Redux "occupied with the accommodation of the classical and the Christian images of the hero," quotes Dryden much later in his career acknowledging a debt to Virgil and Spenser as his masters, and then writes that "it seems reasonable to suggest that his awareness of Spenser[*'s* versification] probably also included awareness of Spenser's way of accommodating classical and Christian heroic images" (p. 17), I would, in turn, suggest that there is no evidence whatsoever to support such a conclusion, however tentatively advanced. And it is only by asking for some degree of acceptance for other such tentative conclusions that Professor Hoffman is able to reach his *final* conclusions.

Readers of Professor Schilling's section on the imagery in *Absalom and Achitophel* will want to compare Professor Hoffman's handling of the same subject. It seemed to me, and others will decide for themselves in this matter, that there is almost nothing new in the latter's examination of the poem, except possibly his linking its imagery with that of the prologues and epilogues, as both rely on images of value and disvalue. Since Professor Hoffman finds the "monarch" image so pervasive in the poems examined, since he sees the image of the king deposed as "Dryden's archetypal image of his age" (p. 136), and since he sees in *Absalom and Achitophel* the coming together "of a stern father and a wayward son" (p. 151), I should like to point out a missed opportunity. Among the arguments with which Achitophel besieges Absalom is one in which he asks how long the latter will be

Content ingloriously to pass thy days
Like one of Virtue's fools that feeds on praise;
Till thy fresh glories, which now shine so bright,
Grow stale and tarnish with our daily sight. (ll. 246-49)

adding,

Had thus old David, from whose loins you spring,
Not dared, when Fortune called him to be king,
At Gath an exile he might still remain. (ll. 262-64)

This is reminiscent, despite Achitophel's presence as speaker, of one of the most famous "stern father-wayward son" scenes in all English literature, the lesson read Hal by Henry IV, in *1 Henry IV*, III.ii. Had Bolingbroke "not dared, when Fortune called him, to be king," he, too, would have remained in exile. And the king, it will be remembered, warned Hal in these words, close to ll. 246-49 of Dryden's poem:

Had I so lavish of my presence been,
So common-hackney'd in the eyes of men,
So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
Had still kept loyal to procession
And left me in reputeless banishment,
A fellow of no mark nor likelihood. (ll. 39-45)

I leave the search for further parallels, both thematic and verbal, to others.

I have a number of other quarrels with Professor Hoffman's work, ranging from his failure to refer in any fashion to Reuben A. Brower's "Dryden's Epic Manner and Virgil" (*PMLA*, LV [1940]) in his discussion of the allusions to

Nisus and Euryalus and to Marcellus in *To Mr. Oldham*, specific Virgilian echoes Brower had already touched upon in his article (upon the first in such a fashion as to render some of Professor Hoffman's statements suspect), to his insistence that "Laurels" in line 24 of *To Mr. Oldham* refers to the reward for victory in a race. Since the "laurels" are linked to Oldham as the "Marcellus of our Tongue" and are an obvious reference to the poet's laurels, it is surely too much to ask a reader to see them as a reference to the Nisus-Euryalus race some fourteen lines earlier in the poem. But Professor Hoffman had already established the race as one of two dominant images in the poem, and the "laurels" were within grasping distance. And who, finally, reading the ingenious interpretation of certain lines in the prologue to *All For Love*, especially the last ten, would ever guess, what Professor Hoffman seems not to know, that Dryden is merely taking a somewhat facetiously deprecatory stance toward his own play, referring, in "that plenteous Autumn" now past, "whose Grapes and Peaches have Indulg'd" the taste of the audience, to the plays that preceded his in the theatrical season? Late in the theatrical season—the play was performed around the twelfth of December—"Such rivell'd Fruits as Winter can afford," i. e. *All For Love*, were offered to the audience. There is nothing in these last ten lines to warrant the statement that they deal with "the relationship of the poet to fellow poets" (p. 45).

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Aspects of American Poetry, edited by Richard M. Ludwig. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962. Pp. x + 335. \$6.75.

In 1962 Howard Mumford Jones retired from Harvard University as Abbott Lawrence Lowell Professor of the Humanities following a distinguished career of over forty years. The twelve essays in this volume are collected as a tribute to Professor Jones, presented to him by his "friends and former students." The chief feeling one brings from the volume is that Professor Jones deserved something better; for if some of these essays represent the best efforts of his friends, even a humanist may be excused for calling upon providence to protect him from his enemies. It is not that the book contains nothing of value, but that the quality is so badly mixed. There are essays here which enlarge our knowledge of a significant subject, which demonstrate that the author felt some responsibility to the reader's intelligence and to the language; but about half the essays fail to do either.

Mr. Ludwig's own contribution, for instance, is an essay on the early poetry of Ezra Pound. His thesis—that the poetry written during the "London Years" is possibly Pound's finest work—will, of course, be questioned by many readers; but the essay is a model of careful exposition, precisely illustrated and, above all, well written. It is immediately followed, however, by a contribution from Claude M. Simpson, "Robert Frost and Man's 'Royal Role'." The portentous title (borrowed from a Frost poem) may betray the reader into expecting that something significant will be said about Frost's poetry. What follows, however,

is a dogged summary of those verses, written since 1947, which Frost was in the custom of distributing to his friends at Christmas. Mr. Simpson's treatment of the poetry makes it appear more trivial than it is. He writes of Frost's poem "One More Brevity": "here Frost is at his best, happy in his language and vivid in every characterizing image." He proceeds to quote:

He dumped himself like a bag of bones,
He sighed himself a couple of groans,
And head to tail then firmly curled
Like swearing off on the traffic world.

This is Frost at his best? It is more like the just-folks self-parody in which Frost so often indulged in his later poetry. The rest of Mr. Simpson's remarks are thoroughly in character. Even though he sprinkles his essay with just enough stock phrases to demonstrate that he knows a thing or two about *criticism* ("multi-level verbal possibilities," "poetic strategies," "echoic series"), the controlling tone and the critical level of Mr. Simpson's essay are best exemplified by the passage he writes on Frost's "Kitty Hawk":

What has been gathering to a focus in the last stretches of this section is the idea of indulgence, of sympathy for either tragedy or triumph. Frost treats the theme personally in his remarks on the kind North Carolinians, then moves a step away to record the attitude of the coast guardsman; finally, he applies the notion to Kitty Hawk, invoking its spirit as presiding over the scene. Genuine emotion is in order, whether for congratulation or pity.

The most charitable reaction to such writing is to call it merely banal.

Perhaps it is needlessly cruel to thus single out Mr. Simpson, for his essay is no worse than several of the other selections. But it is most disconcerting to descend suddenly to this level after Mr. Ludwig's intelligent essay. It is scarcely less disconcerting, following Mr. Simpson's performance, to discover a fine essay by Richard Ellmann, "Wallace Stevens' Ice-Cream," later in the volume. Ellmann's article (first published in the *Kenyon Review*, 1957) is an analysis of some of Stevens poems on the subject of death; it is a perceptive, informative piece of work.

One more essay which deserves special mention is that by Wallace W. Douglas, "Deliberate Exiles: The Social Sources of Agrarian Poetics." It is a virtuoso performance. In less than thirty pages Mr. Douglas manages to employ just about every conceivable form of special pleading, misleading quotation, condescension, and plain nastiness to rehash those very, very tired arguments that the Agrarians smuggled their conservative social and political views into their poetic theories and that their critical essays don't make very good systematic philosophy. One need not agree with the positions of Brooks, Davidson, Ransom, Tate, Warren, and others to insist that they deserve better treatment than this. Indeed, one *couldn't* agree simultaneously with all these men; Mr. Douglas blurs their separate identities into a corporate lump and never betrays the slightest awareness that these men have pointedly disagreed on nearly every issue he raises. One may, on the other hand, agree with Howard Mumford Jones himself when he writes, in *The Theory of American Literature*, that "the truly great critics

have concerned themselves with public problems and have interested themselves in literary history" and still protest against this type of essay. It is more than a little ironic, furthermore, to find Douglas writing on this topic when he seems to have imitated the worst stylistic mannerisms of some of these same critics.

One expects some variation of quality in any collection or anthology, of course. But the wide range in *this* collection is most disturbing. The inevitable question which it raises is: why the almost complete lack of editorial discrimination? The answer is, I suppose, obvious, and it is to be found in the "essays presented to" formula, a formula so well grounded in academic tradition that it is useless to question it at this date. And I do not really wish to question it: there are few enough occasions for publicly honoring distinguished scholars without rejecting one of them. As a principle, the "essays presented to" device will likely yield as good a collection as any other principle. But there is a moral to be drawn. If the criterion for drawing a group of essays together is simply that the individual essay be written by a friend or former student of a distinguished scholar, then some care had better be taken to see that the "friends and former students" have the time or the motivation to contribute work which attains that level of excellence we have a right to expect in such a volume.

The very title, *Aspects of American Poetry*, might seem to indicate that I am not treating the book fairly, for it implies at least a rudimentary theme and some limitation of subject matter. In a sense, of course, every essay in the volume is at least somehow connected with the subject of American poetry. The principle is so thin, however, that granted that one limitation—that the essay be somehow related to the subject of American poetry—nearly anything seems to have been acceptable. The resulting tableau of respected scholars sorting through a vast, undifferentiated strawpile of "American Poetry," to emerge only too often with one limp straw piece, is rather painful. Twenty pages on the date of Sherwood Anderson's "Mid-American Chants" and Anderson's motives in writing them might have some relevance in the context of a biography of Anderson, but what excuse can there be for including it in this volume? The only conceivable reason is that this, too, is an area which a scholar may investigate, and one piece of "scholarship" is as good as another. But surely there must be some criterion of excellence, some critical discrimination, in a book which pretends to have something to say about American poetry. That Sherwood Anderson's fiction is certainly worth studying I do not question; nor do I deny that his "Chants," insipid though they are, may reveal something about his prose. But the logic for including this essay by Mr. Walter B. Rideout in this collection is pretty flimsy. It seems as if even Mr. Rideout might agree, for he gives the show away in his first paragraph: "Neither volume has ever received much critical approval, and justly, for Anderson was a better poet in prose than in verse, despite his feeling that the poems were among the most intimate expressions of his inner life." And a book on American poetry is no place to ask the reader to attend to the details of Anderson's inner life.

My remarks are not intended to raise the old antagonism between the critic and the historical scholar. Such an opposition should not exist at all, and what breach there was in the past seems to be, happily, closing. To refer again to Professor Jones's *Theory of American Literature*, I can gladly subscribe to those statements he makes in the closing pages of that book:

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One can understand the revolt against literary scholarship of the historical order, the scholarship in which everything was as important as everything else, but in revolting against Dry-as-Dust our critics have fallen into the company of Zoilus, who is, according to Swift, the descendant of Hybris.

and:

[The historian] will, however, if he be wise, learn from the critic (provided the critic be wise) that the distinction between first-class work and inferior work can never be blurred, if history is to be useful; but he will not, because much American writing is not first-class, therefore infer that the history of American writing is useless to "culture."

It is measured against such standards, to which most of our best scholars and critics could agree, that I find *Aspects of American Poetry* deficient. There is more blurring of the distinction between the first-class and the inferior than should have been permitted.

I have already spoken of the valuable essays by Ellmann and Ludwig, and it is only just to mention other selections which seem to me valuable. Edwin Fussell, in his "The Meter-Making Argument," approaches American poetry through the aperture of metrics. He distinguishes a "radical" tradition, to be found chiefly in Walt Whitman and Ezra Pound, from a more "conservative" tradition which has backed off from the distinctly "American" rhythms. There are gaping holes in Mr. Fussell's dialectic, and he tends to invest too much value in one of his traditions and too little in the other (in spite of his statement that "the norm of American poetry cannot possibly lie in the Whitman-Pound tradition alone"). And while I personally question whether there is much to be learned from a schematism as general as this, Mr. Fussell at least raises some questions that are worth asking.

The essays by Albert Van Nostrand on Hart Crane and by Radcliffe Squires on Allen Tate are also worthwhile. Mr. Van Nostrand does not quite convince me of the unity of "The Bridge," and he himself has some reservations on the subject. Nevertheless, his reading of "The Bridge" as the struggle, recorded by the "voice" in the poem, to bring widely disparate materials under a principle of order—the struggle itself forming the real subject of the poem—is most interesting. It is a somewhat different approach to Crane than that to which we are accustomed, and it is good to have it. Randolph Squires' essay, "Mr. Tate: Whose Wreath Should Be a Moral," is marred by a cute and chatty tone, and I cannot agree with his argument, that Tate's poems—especially his best ones—"fail to bring together position and feeling." But there are valuable insights in Mr. Squires' essay. Some of his remarks on Tate's diction are perceptive, and his observation on the relationship of Tate and Eliot, that Tate's "poetic scheme and career would not have altered greatly" even if Eliot had never existed, might profitably be considered by some other critics.

So there is indeed meritorious work in *Aspects of American Poetry*, even though its value as a book is gravely impaired by the amount of dead weight it carries and its lack of a serious principle of organization. And one final item will make the book valuable to many readers: it contains a comprehensive bibliography of Howard Mumford Jones's writings.

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Conrad Aiken by Frederick J. Hoffman. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962. Pp. 172. \$3.50.

Conrad Aiken: A Life of His Art by Jay Martin. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1962. Pp. ix + 280. \$5.00.

For a long time, Conrad Aiken's poetry and prose have suffered a lack of interest and serious criticism. Few articles have been published, and there have been no book-length studies between Houston Peterson's *The Melody of Chaos* (1931) and these two helpful and very welcome volumes.

The reader looking for an easy entry to Aiken's poetry and fiction will doubtless prefer Hoffman's book. It is well-informed and well-written, the most useful of the volumes I have seen up to now in the Twayne series. On the whole, its judgments are perceptive and accurate. Its one real failing is not really its fault; there is simply not enough room in a survey to deal adequately with Aiken's large body of writing, and so some of the pieces are well treated and others are skimmed. The preludes are treated to some excellent explication, but there is probably more to be said about *John Deth*, *Osiris Jones*, and *Priapus and the Pool*. The most aggravated form of this skimpiness is to be found in the last chapter, where, in a matter of thirteen pages of statement, some two hundred pages of the *Collected Poems* and three recent volumes of poetry are quickly disposed of. Then, too, so much of Aiken's production is in the form of long, bulky poems that the temptation must be strong to concentrate upon them; as a result, the poems of medium length—including much of Aiken's best work, "The Road," "Exile," and "Sea Holly," for example—are given brief treatment or no treatment at all. But what Hoffman has done was worth doing, and he has done a good job of it. His chapter on the fiction demonstrates more than adequately the fact that Aiken has always been an interesting and clever story writer, but never an important one. The value of his fiction has always been greatest for him in that it has provided an additional outlet for his vigorous, active mind, which plays over the material with wit, intelligence and feeling; it is a brilliant body of work that no lover of Aiken's poetry would care to be without.

The very reader who goes gladly to Hoffman's study to be introduced to Aiken may find himself lost in Martin's book. While Hoffman is content to work from poem to poem, analyzing and evaluating each, Martin bases his book upon the notion that Aiken's chief virtue "lies not in any particular poem or collection of poems, but in his growth," a dubious thesis that handicaps his book from the beginning. Another, probably more serious handicap of the book is Martin's persistence in finding a theory of some sort which can be used as a basis for explaining each piece of poetry and prose. Thus, *Turns and Movies* and *The Jig of Forslin* were written out of the theory that using the materials of the shilling shocker could lend universality to the poetry. An argument in the novel, *Blue Voyage*, about the necessity for fragmentation in literature to account for new discoveries about consciousness is applied to *The Jig of Forslin*. A whole group of Aiken's most interesting shorter poems are lumped together as parables because Aiken has made reference to the term. In general, these notions and other similar ones seem too clever, too limiting, perhaps too pat to account sufficiently for the excellence of Aiken's best poetry.

But there are good things in Martin's book, too. Readings of individual poems are excellent; note especially the remarks on *Priapus and the Pool*, on the theme of the preludes, on the sonnet cycle, *And in the Human Heart*, on "A Letter from Li Po," and numerous other places in the book. Martin has worked hard and intelligently over the texts, some of them very difficult ones, and arrives often at the best kind of criticism there can be, a useful kind that will help the reader get close to the works themselves. His book suffers, like Hoffman's, from skimpy treatment of some of the most interesting of Aiken's poems. The preludes do not receive their due, even though some twenty pages are given to comment and analysis. Likewise, there is much in the symphonies and narratives that is attractive or problematical and requires discussion. The whole problem of the relationship of Aiken's poetry to music is only slightly handled by both books. But Aiken has persistently written nocturnes, preludes, symphonies, and sonatas; and music, like drama, is central to his work.

The appearance of these two studies, each of which is capable of making a reader go to Aiken's poetry and prose, seems a good sign of a reawakening interest in the man and his work. Detailed studies should now appear, and Aiken should regain his place in the anthologies; he is not a small figure in American letters, but his work is being neglected for that of lesser men. A proper critical evaluation is certainly desirable just now, so that he can have the pleasure of knowing that his writings are capable of moving and exciting us.

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