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Criticism Editors

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Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure by Robert Kiely. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964. Pp. viii + 285. $5.50.

It is an interesting and sometimes an exhilarating experience to witness a bright young person discovering incredulously that the generation of his grandfather does not automatically merit unmitigated scorn, and then making an honest effort to comprehend the standards and assumptions of that unimaginable epoch. Mr. Kiely's book on Stevenson is a good specimen of the phenomenon. If he does not go so far as to teach his grandmother how to suck eggs, he certainly announces with enthusiasm his discovery that his grandparents' eggs were not all addled.

At the outset he informs us frankly that "it was admiration for Joseph Conrad that led me into this study of Robert Louis Stevenson," and a little later he explains the impact of Stevenson's death by comparing it with that of Hemingway's. In spite of manful efforts to be fair to the nineties, he does not always avoid patronizing them, as when he applies the phrase "something like critical hysteria" to Conan Doyle's statement that "Stevenson was in the trinity of great short-story writers with Hawthorne and Poe" (in 1890, whom else could he have named, unless Maupassant?).

These natural indications of a mid-twentieth-century stance should not betray us into regarding Mr. Kiely as just another brash young modernist. True, he follows the gauche manner of current dissertationese in assuming that the reader is virtually illiterate and that therefore every author must be mentioned by his full name ("Anthony Trollope," "Gerard Manley Hopkins," "Joseph Conrad"), that geographical references must be explicated ("the Oise River in France," "St. Paul's Cathedral, London"), and that critical platitudes must be spelled out (Hopkins is "an uncommon stylist"). He even lapses into an occasional solecism, as when he uses "juvenilia" to mean "books for juveniles." But the reader soon realizes that Mr. Kiely is not so naive as these mannerisms might suggest. He writes in a clear, concise style and his critical views are sound and often penetrating. Having backed into Stevenson by way of Hemingway and Conrad, he is probably all the better qualified to write about his work with fresh insights.

He is quite right, of course, in pointing out that much of the exaggerated praise of Stevenson was sentimental and uncritical, based on memories of childhood enjoyment or on admiration for courage in the face of suffering. No other English author but Browning has been so ill served by the adulation of his devotees. Admittedly, too, Stevenson was something of a poseur, encouraging the popular image of a frail adventurer animated by an indomitable spirit. Such extraneous elements, however, are properly disregarded when Mr. Kiely gets down to his business of estimating the real merits of Stevenson as an author.

English writers in general, and novelists in particular, were becoming more and more self-conscious about their art as the nineteenth century proceeded. Like James and Moore and Yeats, Stevenson was a highly articulate critic. In

his case, indeed, the criticism in both bulk and significance comes close to rivaling the creative work. Such authors' aesthetic theories must necessarily be applied to their own fiction or poetry, though the two may not always prove fully consistent. Stevenson's essays, however, are more enlightening comments on his original writings than any uttered by later critics. He was at the epicenter of the great controversy over realism, touched off by Besant's "Art of Fiction," intensified by James's essay with the same title, and soon exacerbated by Howells' blunt iconoclasm. Stevenson leapt into the conflict with a gay confidence consistent with his usual attitude toward both life and letters, and no doubt profoundly irritating to his sober adversaries. In half a dozen admirable essays he pleaded the cause of romance with a persuasiveness that has never been fully countered.

Mr. Kiely points out Stevenson's inherent affinity with the aesthetic movement, often obscured by his being grouped with the "activists," such as Henley and Kipling. On an early page Lionel Johnson is quoted as remarking that "of modern writers only Mr. Pater shares with Mr. Stevenson this fine anxiety not to play life false by using inaccurate expressions"; and later Mr. Kiely observes that "adventure, for Stevenson, like art for the aesthetes, has a kind of sacred purity about it which ought not to be tainted with moral or psychological convention." Elsewhere it is said again that "Stevenson may not at first have been able to avoid the hazards of aesthetic indulgence, but that should not obscure his salutary efforts to distinguish art from propaganda." The further point might have been added that the other essay that most nearly approaches Stevenson's in defence of romantic fiction is Wilde's on "The Decay of Lying."

Even more interesting is Mr. Kiely's emphasis upon a strong neo-classical element in Stevenson's supposedly ultra-romantic views. There is not merely his preference (like Scott's and Thackeray's) for eighteenth-century settings, or the obvious resemblance to Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett in the innocence of his heroes and the incompetence of their adversaries, but his tough-minded preference for action over introspection: "At the first signs of morbidity, he is off to play with Robinson Crusoe and Joseph Andrews." Furthermore, Mr. Kiely dwells upon

> his reverence for the general, the categorical, and the formal. His first impulse may be Romantic, but his second thought is almost always classical. We find him again and again in his criticism beginning with Coleridge, concluding with Aristotle; promising Hazlitt, delivering Johnson. The same tendency is visible in much of his fiction as well. How often his novels open in Romantic suggestiveness with inviting scenes of rustic nature or in dark corners of Gothic kirk-yards, with hints of vague mysteries or unspeakable passions, only to develop the clear outlines, in his early career, of a child's game and later on, of a moral fable.

As Mr. Kiely's topic is "the fiction of adventure," his four principal chapters deal with the major methods by which Stevenson strove to integrate his primitive material with the sophisticated preconceptions of the modern mind. Though the categories are bound to be sometimes arbitrary, as each book has some elements of more than one method, on the whole the approach is rewarding. The four chapters are roughly chronological with Stevenson's development, but they often overlap. One of the last novels, for instance, *Catriona*, is included

in the earliest chapter, along with *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. Because of his tendency to experiment with various techniques alternately and to revert capriciously to an earlier manner, Stevenson has been stigmatized as a dilettante by critics who prefer to see an author advancing resolutely toward ever higher achievements; but Mr. Kiely offers the defense that his "apparent lack of direction is in itself a kind of direction, and his refusal to be philosophical while indulging in his boyish daydreams is itself a philosophy."

In dealing with the first category, "Adventure as Boy's Daydream," Mr. Kiely brings out several significant qualities of the three novels dealt with. One is the absence of moral criteria. "Particular moral aims, political causes, and social crusades are swept under by the timeless and overwhelming wave of human energy." Consequent upon this, and almost equally important (though mentioned only briefly), is that the three books are neither tragic nor comic, "because in them there is no moral or philosophical ideal not reached." The third essential feature is that the characterization takes on the nature of a game of make-believe, with the performers assuming roles to fit the needs of the story. This too relates with the absence of moral judgments, in that the heroes are not all good and the villains not all bad; it is not that both heroes and villains are complex mixtures of virtue and vice, but that they alternate abruptly from one guise to another. John Silver's shifts from kindly humorist to cold-blooded murderer foreshadow the antithetical identities of Jekyll and Hyde.

In my opinion Mr. Kiely is not sufficiently explicit in linking these qualities with the fact that all three stories are narrated in the first person by teen-age protagonists: the deficiencies in moral concern, in sense of the comic and tragic, and in perception of psychological complexity, can be regarded as realistic portrayal of immature mentalities rather than as limitations in the author's outlook. Indeed, as Mr. Kiely indicates, Stevenson eliminated several passages in his manuscript of *Catriona* in which the aging David Balfour uttered moral judgments in looking back on his youthful self. I feel, too, that Mr. Kiely does not sufficiently recognize the relationship between the ambivalent representation of the likeable rascals John Silver, Captain Hoseason, and James Moore Drummond, and the serious effort of eminent Victorian writers, such as Browning, Thackeray, Eliot, and Meredith, to demolish the old stereotypes of heroes and villains, to reveal the deceptiveness of appearances, and to assert the relativity of truth.

As Mr. Kiely points out, only Jim Hawkins is a true exponent of the boyish self-glorifying dream, in which he is dynamic and always victorious over absurdly impotent antagonists. David Balfour, narrator of the other two books, reveals the infection of modern self-doubt, and is usually the passive victim of chance or of other and stronger personalities. It might have been mentioned that the titles of both books imply this condition: the actual kidnapping of David is a relatively brief episode, but for the rest of the story he remains the captive of circumstances and of Alan Breck; and the sequel was named for the wilful heroine who dominates him. Mr. Kiely obscures the latter fact by using the American title, *David Balfour*, which ineptly shifts the focus from the positive to the negative character.

The next chapter, "Adventure as Comic Satire," treats *New Arabian Nights* and *The Dynamiter*. Here obviously Stevenson has gone to the other extreme from his juvenile and rustic personae, Jim and David. It is the shortest of the four chapters, and Mr. Kiely seems to nullify his choice of title at the outset

with a convincing demonstration that Stevenson was intellectually and temperamentally unfitted to be a satirist. The approach proves valuable, however, in accounting for the unsatisfactory nature of these stories. Mr. Kiely points out that Stevenson was all too often guilty of changing direction in the middle of a work. As to his essays, the indictment seems to me to be too severe: it is a virtue of the familiar essay to be digressive or inconsistent, and it is unfair to disparage Stevenson's by comparing them with Johnson's instead of with Lamb's. But incontrovertibly his works of fiction suffer repeatedly from a structural break or a shift of tone, and the stories discussed in this chapter are flagrant examples.

The form of both books is in itself awkward—neither an organic novel nor a collection of short stories, but a series of loosely linked episodes. Mr. Kiely's thesis, however, is that the main defect is not in structure but in tone. "The Suicide Club" sets out to ridicule the cult of decadence (Mr. Kiely does not mention that the ineffectual American expatriate in the second episode is more like a burlesque of James's heroes); but, as already shown, Stevenson was himself akin to the aesthetes in exalting literary skill above significance, and his assumed *joie de vivre* was a defence against an obsession with death profounder than the morbid pose of the decadents. Hence in "The Suicide Club" his satire was more relevant to himself than to his victims, and he could resolve the dilemma only by lapsing from comic aloofness into fantasy, farce, or melodrama. Each episode centers upon an elaborate and ill-motivated hoax, compounded by the gullibility of the protagonist, until the reader wearies of being fraudulently imposed upon by an adolescent device that "casts aspersions on the validity of . . . adventure fiction, and on the integrity of artists like himself who write it." In these early stories, says Mr. Kiely, Stevenson unwittingly betrays his inner limitations and timidities more damagingly than anywhere else:

> "Unimportant privacies" in the form of morbid obsessions, erotic fantasies, thinly veiled expressions of self-pity, misgivings about art and artists, uncertainty about the nature and value of adventure, crop up unexpectedly and baldly in *New Arabian Nights* and *The Dynamiter* as they do in no other of his works; because at no other time in his career was he so rigorously trying to keep his "posteriors," the private and "painful sides of life," out of sight, where they seemed to him to belong.

The third category, "Adventure as Fable of Faraway Places," is less clearly focused. The chapter opens with a discussion of the relation between British imperialism and the fiction of Kingsley, Kipling, and Haggard, which is perceptive in itself but not closely relevant, since it leads to the conclusion that Stevenson's use of exotic settings was quite different. His early, Hawthorne-like story, "Will o'the Mill," a portrayal of a quietist who suppresses his youthful yearning for travel and action, is seen as a negative statement of his ideal, with the interesting suggestion that the story was intended as a condemnation of Wordsworth. But, as usual, Stevenson's attitude is described as ambivalent. Later his stories of remote regions prove similarly to be representative of a Victorian quest for an earthly paradise which "shifts uneasily and awkwardly back and forth between the ideal and the real." But Stevenson is given full credit for the honesty with which, as a result of his South Seas experiences, he acknowledged

his discovery of "the undomesticated heart of human anguish and . . . an idea of evil he had labored for a long time to disown."

The Wreckers is mentioned briefly as reflecting the confident mood in which Stevenson expected to find mental and physical health in the primitive conditions of his new home. "The Beach at Falesá" is then analysed fully as a transitional work, in which the Rousseauistic idea of the noble savage and Stevenson's early amoral penchant for action for its own sake are beset by perplexity. Finally *The Ebb Tide* figures as the ultimate disenchantment and acceptance of vice and misery as inherent in the human condition.

The final chapter, "Adventure as Modern Epic," is confined mainly to *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Weir of Hermiston*; and while predictably Mr. Kiely agrees with the critical consensus that they are Stevenson's finest works, he explains how they emerged out of the other types of his fiction. His South Seas experiences having convinced him that the dream of an exotic utopia was impractical, he looked back with nostalgia and a degree of guilty conscience from pagan Samoa to Calvinist Scotland. He was still obsessed with the theme of dual personality—James Durie is as baffling a compound of charm and villainy as John Silver; but now he sees such figures as symbolizing the malady of civilization: they "achieve a kind of heroic stature through an almost demonic refusal to submit. . . . With a puny opposition, all the old heroic virtues dwindle into cowardice and vice. Bravery turns to recklessness, strength to brutality, perseverance to inflexibility, and justice to persecution. In each book the protagonist . . . by an accident of birth has been cast into a tribe of pygmies which provides no natural outlet for his extraordinary potential." Conversely, the decline of the invincible boy-hero, initiated in the change from cocksure Jim Hawkins to diffident David Balfour, reaches its culmination in Henry Durie, conscientious and respectable, but emotionally sterile and so frustrated by his brother's virility that in middle age he literally reverts to childishness.

It is paradoxical that Mr. Kiely, in spite of his looking at Stevenson from a present-day angle, says little about his numerous anticipations of later literary developments. Exceptional is his remark that when Stevenson says "a proposition of geometry does not compete with life, and a proposition of geometry is a fair and luminous parallel for a work of art" he foreshadows the formalism of T. E. Hulme. An equally cursory observation suggests the connection between Conrad's *Victory* and *The Ebb Tide*, but there is no comment on similarities to Conrad or Maugham in Stevenson's other South Pacific tales. Nor, apart from a casual allusion to *Catcher in the Rye* and *Lord of the Flies*, is any attention paid to how closely his use of the amoral boy's-eye point of view resembles the vast current preoccupation with children's egocentric, ruthless, and uncritical attitude toward experience. Nothing is said about how *New Arabian Nights*, via Conan Doyle, fathered the detective mystery, or how *Prince Otto*, via Anthony Hope and Phillips Oppenheim, fathered the story of international intrigue. Indeed, *Prince Otto* is nowhere mentioned at all. More importantly, Mr. Kiely does not develop the kinship between Stevenson's whimsical allusion to "my Brownies, God bless them! who do one half my work for me while I am fast asleep" and the later theory that the creative imagination functions in "the deep well of the unconscious." Even the favorite modern concept of archetypal myths is latent in Stevenson's use of dream-inspired primitive themes of violence, escape and pursuit, or the dark horror of the *doppelgänger.*

Mr. Kiely's survey is far from complete, concentrating as it does on a relatively few stories to illustrate his points. Not only *Prince Otto* but *The Black Arrow* and *St. Ives* are ignored, and even *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* receives only incidental mention. As his book proceeds Mr. Kiely sometimes seems unduly censorious when he overlooks complexities in various stories in order to make them fit his *schema*; but on the whole the book demonstrates the variety and the increasing depth and seriousness of the fiction that Stevenson produced during a span of only about sixteen years. Stevenson was a natural victim for the debunkers, and for a decade they had their fun at his expense, from George Hellman to Doris Dalglish. The turn of the tide was marked by David Daiches' clear-sighted appraisal, and about the same time the biographical record was justly presented by J. C. Furnas. Now Mr. Kiely offers a balanced critical analysis of Stevenson's fiction. It is not only a salutary antidote to the shallow clichés about his escapism and artificiality and whimsy, but a sound vindication of the "romantic revival" at the end of the nineteenth century.

LIONEL STEVENSON

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Nature and Grace in Art by John W. Dixon, Jr. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964. Pp. xii + 220; 42 figs. $7.50.

Much has been written about the relation between Christianity and the arts, but surprisingly little of it combines breadth with dispassionate intelligence. Leaving aside innumerable cases of axe-grinding, one finds a literature which extends from the evocative prose of Malraux to the teutonically precise and thorough character of monographic studies on various iconographical themes. Missing is a good book in English which poses the most basic questions about the relation between the Christian faith and image-making. Mr. Dixon has attempted to fill that gap by writing "an outline of the approach to the criticism of Christian art," whose ultimate goal "is the attainment of some genuine catholicity of awareness of the significance of man's forming."

Mr. Dixon writes that the Christian work of art "finds its life between nature and grace and the creations of Christian art are to be found at the intersection." He goes on to suggest that from a Christian standpoint art may be considered profitably under four broad categories: "The artist lives within the natural order and his celebration of it makes the art of creation. He explores and analyzes it and makes the art of the image of God. He sees and mourns its brokenness and makes the art of the fall. He lives within its healing and makes the art of redemption."

Part One, "Forms of the Christian Imagination," is devoted to the formulation of a Christian critique of the arts, while Part Two, "The Evidence," illustrates this critique by a discussion of western art from various periods and places.

Mr. Dixon is imbued with admirable prejudices. He insists at the outset that a work of art is a problem in structure before it is either symbol or expression, thus assuring us that he is seeing things from an artist's point of view. He rightly affirms that all art has relevance for the Christian, and refutes the idea that

some styles are more Christian than others. To make this latter point, he chooses many of his examples from Italian Renaissance art, which traditionally has been accused of excessive paganism. Part Two reveals a writer who is at once perceptive and sensitive before specific works of art.

However, the test of a book with the pretensions and scope of this one is whether its critical apparatus is illuminating, and whether its author can sustain the high quality of writing indispensable for such a synthesis. Regrettably, one will probably be disappointed on both accounts.

Mr. Dixon's critical tools are generally acceptable, but time and again they do not really enlighten. For example (and space prohibits a fair discussion here), non-objective paintings are categorized under the art of creation, for they reveal the artist "delighting in the nature of things and bringing into being their effective relations." This is perfectly agreeable and obvious. One's thoughts about either Christianity or art are unaltered, for the obvious has been restated in a none-too-interesting fashion. The critical apparatus of the book is so broad and inert that it rings hollow when brought into contact with specific works of art. Part Two may be read alone, which raises the question as to whether the book is not repetitive.

Far more serious is the pedestrian presentation of the argument. The pages are studded with the banal ("The true artist is the one who can submit himself to the structure of his material and bring forth out of it the revelation of a new meaning." [p. 94] "Cubism is not the whole of twentieth-century art and it is not, in fact, of greater value than some other styles." [p. 189]), and at times the writing is ponderously ugly ("Leaving aside the definitional subtleties not germane to this study the essential principle of Neo-Platonism in its impingement on the work of Michelangelo is the continuum it establishes between the natural object, the work of art dependent on the natural object, and the divine." [p. 142]). We are told on p. 127 that "It was Masaccio's responsibility to work out the implications of Giotto's style and bring it into the mainstream of the Renaissance–," an example of ideas which are most naive if taken at face value. And this reader was alienated upon discovering that Mr. Dixon has the *Madonna della Sedia* in mind when he refers to the "sentimentalities of Raphael's minor Madonnas." (p. 119)

The following is a paragraph quoted in its entirety: "What this Gothic stood for was a great thing and there was great quality in it even in its decline. In its decline however, it was no longer a fruitful insight but a codification of rules which lay as a smothering weight on the spirit of man. Having worked out what could be worked out within the terms of these principles, human creativity had to turn to new expression and new knowledge. The Renaissance turned to the search for the reality of the world and the reality of man's mind." (p. 120)

Mr. Dixon's bravery in the face of his difficult subject goes for naught midst such uninteresting thought and graceless prose.

A. RICHARD TURNER

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Ideas in the Drama, Selected Papers from the English Institute, ed. with a foreword by John Gassner. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964. Pp. ix + 183. $4.75.

It is a notoriously difficult task to organize a conference of critics on a specific topic of discussion. It must be even more difficult to coordinate their solicited and voluntary contributions in a single publication under a general title. In contrast to other scholarly conventions, large and small, the English Institute has more often than not achieved coherent discussions of literary problems and consequently has been able to publish valuable studies on single topics of general interest. This year Professor Gassner has put together a series of papers from the 1962 and 1963 conferences on Ideas in the Drama. In his foreword he points to these conferences as notable events because they signaled the "restoration of a balance between aesthetic and nonaesthetic considerations" in recent criticism; he says that to have talked unabashedly about ideas in the drama would have appeared "downright quixotic" only a decade ago. Perhaps the claim is a little exaggerated since even in the heyday of strict analysis the best critics always returned to the question of how ideas get into poetry, the novel and the drama. And this is precisely what the present group of writers does with the plays of Euripides, Ibsen, O'Neill, Brecht, Sartre, and others.

Though each essay makes a worthwhile contribution to the announced topic, there lurks an inconsistency in the make-up of the volume. "Ideas in the Drama" is an adequate description of the essays by Edwin Engel, Victor Brombert, and Gerald Weales, each of whom traces one or more ideas through the work of his chosen playwright. Each shows clearly how a preoccupation with certain ideas, whether private or public, is transmuted into dramatic form: for example, O'Neill's attempts to make out of his personal agonies "something universal and impersonal," or Sartre's version of the "human condition as a form of collective imprisonment," or Brecht's search for a theater "to record the disappearance of the individual." These are excellent studies in their own right. But the title of the volume takes on another sense in relation to the two most interesting essays, the one written by Professor Gassner ("Shaw on Ibsen and the Drama of Ideas") and the other by Professor Arrowsmith (on Euripides, "A Greek Theater of Ideas"). Between them, they have the beginnings of another conference having to do with "The Drama of Ideas." And that is an altogether different subject.

One suspects that Aristotle did not know what to make of Euripides, or that, like some conservative modern commentators, he fixed the norms for a tragic theater and politely by-passed what did not fit his scheme. In any case, the Drama of Ideas, whenever it has made its appearance, has been anti-Aristotelian in nature, and it has yet to find, apart from Hebbel, a modern critical exponent to describe it thoroughly. Professor Arrowsmith's "A Greek Theater of Ideas" is an admirable beginning. He approaches the Euripidean drama as representing a new conception of the function of theater which, incidentally, is not unlike that of certain moderns, e. g. Brecht or Sartre. In its dialectic structure the Euripidean drama of ideas generally embodies "a carefully construed clash between myth (or received reality) . . . and fact (or experienced reality)." It presents a cultural critique at a time of cultural crisis; its paired antagonists

" represent both the warring modes of a divided culture and the new incompleteness of the human psyche." And thus " the essential anagnorisis . . . is not between one actor and another but between the audience and its own experience, as that experience is figured in the plays. Anagnorisis here is knowing moral choice, exercised on a problem which aims at mimicking the quandary of a culture." Professor Arrowsmith is right in saying that this is a difficult theater and that it has therefore failed to draw forth an adequate critical response.

If we translate " cultural crisis " into " historical crisis " and conceive of the dialectic struggle as one between two viable moral claims at a point of collision between two worlds, we have roughly Hebbel's version of the drama of ideas. Hebbel's model was the *Antigone*, not Euripides (perhaps Arrowsmith's reading of the Euripidean drama presupposes a knowledge of twentieth-century developments in psychology and literature), yet Hebbel understood that the modern drama had to supersede Aristotle and Shakespeare if it was to be a significant drama of ideas. The dialectic would operate not merely in the characters, as in Shakespeare, he wrote in his journal; it had to get directly into the Idea itself so that not merely the relation of man to the Idea, but the justification of the Idea itself would be debated. What he had in mind was precisely a cultural critique or a critique of existing institutions. Though Ibsen and Shaw take up the argument where Hebbel left off, regrettably none of the contributors pays much attention to Hebbel's speculations about the drama of ideas except to quote Eric Bentley's summary statements from *The Playwright as Thinker*.

Shaw wrote his declaration of independence from Shakespeare when his turn came as a practicing playwright to give a rationale of the modern drama of ideas. Shakespeare " has left us no intellectually coherent drama, and could not afford to pursue a genuinely scientific method in his studies of character and society, though in such unpopular plays as All's Well, Measure for Measure, and Troilus and Cressida, we find him ready and willing to start at the twentieth century if the seventeenth would only let him " (Preface to *Plays Unpleasant*), and more dogmatically ". . . Shakespeare survives by what he has in common with Ibsen, and not by what he has in common with Webster and the rest " (*Quintessence*, 1913). Vivian Mercier and especially John Gassner carry the discussion to the threshold of the modernist drama via Shaw's predictions of the new aims and techniques of twentieth-century drama. Actually Shaw only discovered for himself what the nineteenth-century German theorists had suspected about the drama of ideas. But there is no denying that his forceful delivery refreshes these insights: " In the new plays, the drama arises through a conflict of unsettled ideals rather than through vulgar attachments, rapacities, generosities, resentments, ambitions, misunderstandings, oddities and so forth as to which no moral question is raised. The conflict is not between clear right and wrong; the villain is as conscientious as the hero, if not more so: in fact, the question which makes the play interesting (when it *is* interesting) is which is the villain and which the hero " (*Major Critical Essays*, p. 139).

Despite Ibsen's devotion to tight logical plot structures, which made him appear to be a traditionalist, Shaw learned to see in his plays the uncompromising, unsentimental challenge of social and moral conventions and beyond that the beginnings of a technique of irony and paradox. Indeed, as Professor Gassner points out, in summarizing the technical novelty of the new drama in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* Shaw takes us beyond Ibsen and, in effect, introduces

us to the various developments of the drama of ideas, from *Heartbreak House* to the most recent examples of the post-war drama. He speaks of the "substitution of a forensic technique of recrimination, disillusion, and penetration through ideals to the truth, with a free use of all the rhetorical and lyrical arts of the orator, the preacher, the pleader, and the rhapsodist" (*Major Critical Essays*, p. 146). Surprisingly enough the recent experimental drama is also anticipated by Hebbel in a little known preface to his oddly modernist play, *Ein Trauerspiel in Sizilien*, predicting a drama based on the relativity of values and paradoxical conduct in a pluralistic society, in the form either of satirical comedy or of tragic farce.

When Shaw reminds us that "rhetoric, irony, argument, paradox, epigram, parable, the rearrangement of haphazard facts into orderly and intelligent situations [are] both the oldest and the newest arts of the drama and [that] your plot construction and art of preparation are only the tricks of theatrical talent, the shifts of moral sterility, not the weapons of dramatic genius" (*Major Critical Essays*, p. 146), he is saying that the drama of ideas and the diverse anti-Aristotelian techniques which it gives rise to are "new only on the modern stage"; and we are back with Euripides. We must conclude that any time of pronounced crisis may breed a drama of ideas bringing into conflict the old with the new, or received reality with experienced reality, or one moral claim with another—in short, testing ideas in collision or merely in juxtaposition. From this point of view, this volume of essays sets up an interesting relationship between plays from different theaters and incidentally causes the reader to speculate about the unsuspected kinship between Euripides, the Shakespeare of *Troilus and Cressida*, and such modern writers as Hebbel, Shaw, Brecht, and Sartre.

ALFRED SCHWARZ

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The School of Love: The Evolution of the Stuart Love Lyric by H. M. Richmond. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964. Pp. 338. $6.50.

It is easy to find faults in this daring book, since so many writers are involved that errors and blind spots are bound to be revealed. Corrupt texts, such as "Take oh take those lips away" on pages 115-116, sometimes mar the discussion. Sidney Musgrove's "The Universe of Robert Herrick," Langbaum's *Poetry of Experience*, Harbage's *Cavalier Drama*, and Kathleen Lynch's *Social Mode of Restoration Comedy* (not to mention very recent books) would have given a little more ballast to chapters IV, V, and VI. *The Awkward Age*, called an early James novel (page 294), was written shortly before *The Wings of the Dove*. "Youth and beauty now are thine" (page 221), is probably not Suckling's. The Realpolitik of love according to F. R. Leavis underlies many of the value judgments of poems, causing the author to praise William Cartwright's "No Platonic Love" at the expense of Marvell's "Coy Mistress," and to praise Thomas Carew at the expense of Robert Herrick, as though it were necessary to disparage one writer who had not sufficiently "evolved" in order to show the originality of another. Poems almost totally dissimilar, except for some slight analogue of

theme, are sometimes set next to each other, as if to imply that one is somehow the source of the other. In short we are presented with another Great Tradition—a Line of Love.

Nevertheless I found it a thoroughly exciting book, by a man deeply read in the lyrics of at least four languages, a commentary pregnant with examples and striking juxtapositions of ancient, renaissance and modern poems. I am especially impressed by the way Mr. Richmond shows successive changes in the praise of the intangible mistress, climaxing in Donne's "Air and Angels" and "Negative Love" (adapted from Ronsard), and further modified by Caroline poets. Numerous stock romantic situations, barely suggested by classical poets, were increasingly dramatized in the 16th and 17th century: the first encounter of two lovers, the dream of one's mistress, the proposal, rapture, and eventual repudiation of the mistress. In every case, we can see the conventional ploys reshaped by later writers into something less elementary, more argumentative, more intellectual, more acute, and more wide-ranging. Mutual love triumphed over seduction. Secular love received an invigorating injection of intellectual discipline, "which liberated it from the elementary patterns of response afforded most earlier models. The seventeenth century saw the advance in intellectual awareness of love to be as significant as that in the revision of astronomy's picture of the universe."

Even in matters of phrasing and rhythm, Mr. Richmond shows the gradual enrichment of meaning in Stuart lyrics. The best example is the way the syntactic formula of Carew's "Ask me no more" is carefully related to a number of its analogues. In fact the whole of chapter III on the new style seems to support Yvor Winters' contention that metrical or grammatical form may often impel a poet to expression. Chapter IV discusses the "significant advance" of human sensibility of love in Caroline poets such as Thomas Stanley, Cartwright, Marvell, and Waller. With conscious self-mastery they chrystalized and controlled their expression more than Donne or Shakespeare. The final chapters look ahead, tracing the "new attitudes" in some interesting analogues: Pope's "Eloïsa to Abelard," Shelley's "Yet look on me—take not thine eyes away," Browning's dramatic lyrics, and several of Thomas Hardy's poems. In this way Mr. Richmond suggests that the Stuart lyrics revealed discoveries of feeling and thought that are still relevant to modern men.

The author's method deserves special attention. There is an advantage gained by his focus upon lyrics alone, without venturing far into philosophy or cultural history. He recognizes the connections with other kinds of writing (such as the influence of Christianity, renaissance philosophy of love, or the heroic drama), but poems concerning sexual passion offer ample material for comparative study. Unlike the old-fashioned source hunters and the new-fangled archetypal critics, Mr. Richmond does not reduce later works to their origins, to assert that the essential form lies in some primitive germ or some collective urge. Rather he is acutely conscious of the way later writers depart from their predecessors or from a supposed archetype; contrasts such as these show the value of source study and the real graph of literary change which we are just beginning to understand. Art histories such as E. H. Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* or Kenneth Clark's *The Nude* have gone much farther in comparative analysis than literary histories, so perhaps we can learn from their example. The main premise of

this kind of history is the view that artistic creation is always an adaptation of existing conventions, ways of seeing things that are transformed in major or minor creations. Making and matching constantly change the limits of illusion, while at the same time projecting new meaning into the traditions. This is different from Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," because it concerns moral and psychological as well as aesthetic awareness. Because art stands for life, we appreciate it as a representation of life, a creation of human thoughts and human feelings, to which we react as whole human beings. Thus changes in human perception are accompanied by or perhaps even initiated by changes in artistic perception.

Mr. Richmond, in his last chapter, sketches some of the possible steps in a typical history: 1) invention, 2) elaboration, 3) a strange retrenchment, condensation and integration during the later years of a tradition. Since the Stuarts are at the end of a tradition and since a full understanding of the novelty of later writers depends upon sympathetic and thorough knowledge of previous conventions, we will eventually have to know more about Petrarchan poetry. Then we may be able to validate some of the bold assertions in this admirable book.

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The Triple Soul: Browning's Theory of Knowledge by Norton B. Crowell. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1963. Pp. xiv + 235. $5.50.

For over seventy years most Browning scholars have subscribed to a thesis set down by Sir Henry Jones in his *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher* (1891) that in certain of his later poems Browning erred fundamentally in severing feeling and intelligence, love and reason, and in assigning to feeling, love, and intuition a higher place and function in the development of the soul than he assigned to intelligence, reason, and knowledge. Sir Henry's thesis may well have evolved from Mrs. Sutherland Orr's introduction to her Browning *Handbook* (1885) in which she claimed that Browning's central doctrine was that, though thought is absolute in itself, it is relative in the mind of the thinker so that no man can attain the whole truth of any abstract subject and that no language is special enough to convey it. Furthermore, she stated, Browning "was convinced that uncertainty is essential to the spiritual life," that "the individual knows nothing of the Divine scheme," and that "Love . . . is the necessary channel" between man and God.

Taking his title from Browning's "A Death in the Desert," Professor Norton B. Crowell takes issue with the Jones thesis and holds that Browning believed in a triple soul of man—body, mind, and spirit—all three "working in harmony to fulfill the divine plan." Browning was not so much against the intellect as he was against the abuse of the intellect arising from a lack of harmony with the other elements of the triple soul. With a care that is most affecting, Professor Crowell has gone through all of Browning's verse, supplied us with interpretations of all pertinent passages, and manfully refuted seventy years of scholarship that has echoed Henry Jones.

At the same time, one has the impression that Professor Crowell places undue

emphasis on the influence of Sir Henry and is unduly apprehensive lest Browning may be discarded "as a thinker, if not as a poet." Most people who now read the Browning lyrics are not at all affected by his theory of knowledge and are not concerned with any extra-literary significance his verse may have. Indeed readers neglect his later work, in which he shows an eccentric emphasis on argument and reason. It is as a poet that he must stand or fall and not as a thinker. This is not a disparagement; the same has been said of Shakespeare.

Browning wrote so much verse and so many letters and was such a special pleader himself that later special pleaders could make conflicting cases of his philosophy. An unpublished letter in the Pforzheimer Library is pertinent. "What struck me so much in that Life of Schopenhauer which you gave me," he wrote to Mrs. FitzGerald in 1876, "was that doctrine which he considered his grand discovery—and which *I* had been persuaded of from my boyhood—and have based my whole life upon:—that the soul is above and *behind* the intellect which is merely its servant. I first met with the doctrine's enunciation in a memoir of Robert Hall the Baptist minister, who was subject to fits of mental alienation, and expected to be eventually deprived altogether of his reasoning faculty. [A friend assured him that] the instrument was not the craftsman, the intelligence—not the soul. The consequences of this doctrine were so momentous to me—so destructive of vanity, on the one hand,—or undue depression at failure, on the other—that I am sure there must be references to and deductions from it throughout the whole of my works." One might make a case to show that, without having read him, Browning was in agreement with Schopenhauer when in his first book he cast doubt upon the efficacy of the reason as an instrument. An even more valuable study should be made of the influence of the sermons of Robert Hall and of other dissenting ministers on Browning's thought. Mrs. Orr tells us that Browning did not read the German philosophers—but he did read Carlyle and listen to the dissenters.

Browning's optimism, which Thomas Hardy described as that of a dissenting grocer, has long been a target. Henry Jones complained that it had "no better foundation than personal conviction," and Betty Miller seems to complain that his optimism was based solely on the hope of survival after this life. Philip Drew in the winter issue of *Victorian Poetry* effectively takes Jones to task for his complaint, and Professor Whitehead in *Science and the Modern World* seems to agree with Browning in attributing to the religious vision our one ground for optimism. But was Browning an optimist? One cannot ignore what he wrote to Isabella Blagden six years after Mrs. Browning's death: "The general impression of the past is as if it had been pain. I would not live it over again, not one day of it."

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