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Book Reviews

The Artifice of Reality: Poetic Style in Wordsworth, Foscolo, Keats, and Leopardi by Karl Kroeber. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964. Pp. xx + 235. \$6.50.

The extent to which our culture has been "departmentalized" is simply shocking. People majoring in or maybe teaching English will choose to ignore what lies beyond their immediate linguistic horizon, since after all there is enough good literature written in English. They may concede that Dante exists, that French literature exists, that there was once somebody called Goethe; but they will refuse to glimpse any further. I have heard Manzoni's name shrugged off, I have seen a colleague (ironically associated with the Comparative Literature program of a big Middlewestern university) laugh at the idea that Goethe's advocacy of *Weltliteratur*, world literature, was anything serious at all. I have read the preface to an anthology of Romantic literature in which the learned editor excuses his own deliberate omission of Pushkin, Leopardi, Foscolo and Manzoni (and of others as well) on the ground that their "attitude to Romanticism" was "ambiguous" and that, furthermore, they were "derivative"! This was, of course, an acute case of cultural arteriosclerosis on the part of a man hardened by mere source study and ideology to the point of forgetting all about poetry as such; but at least he knew of the existence of those Continental poets he so awkwardly dismissed from his ambitious context. I still remember the bewildered reaction of some English graduate students at my mention of such un-English and un-American writers as might shed further light on certain aspects of the English, or Anglo-American ones, we were discussing. I had to debate for half an hour, outside the classroom, to convince a bright girl that there were Continental counterparts to the English Metaphysicals, that indeed Richard Crashaw could not be understood apart from these models or parallels, as Praz's book *The Flaming Heart* should have told her in the first place (Warnke's anthology not having appeared yet at the time). But her bewilderment came from the English specialist of the period, of course. Simply to speak of the pleiads that lie outside the English galaxy is to acquire a reputation for being a name-dropper; and yet the favor that Eliot and Pound have found in the academies should do something to reverse this unfortunate trend. For they, if anybody, have exemplified *Weltliteratur* in their poetry, and argued convincingly for it in their essays.

In such a general predicament, Karl Kroeber's book should be hailed as a pioneering venture. First of all, it answers the all-too-frequent objection raised against attempts to study literature in a European, or Western, rather than just national context: the objection that such attempts are doomed to amateurish superficiality. Kroeber by no means indulges in facile generalizations or sweeping statements unsupported by careful study. He knows his sources, both English and Italian, and he realizes that, in literature, to compare is not to equalize. But he makes the acknowledged uniqueness of a poem a matter of focus and not of dogmatic atomism, and so finds it possible to relate the unique

to, and within, a meaningful encompassing context. For him to read Wordsworth's Lucy poems along with Leopardi's "A Silvia," that poignant elegy for a prematurely dead girl, is not to forget that Leopardi is Leopardi and Wordsworth, Wordsworth, or that a poem written in English is irreducible to one written in Italian. His focus is on style, but he refuses to believe that poetry takes shape in a cultural vacuum, and he manages to explore with tact the historical relevance of the four poets under examination, whom he sees as harbingers of a new kind of humanism in the aftermath of the seismic shock-wave propagating from revolutionary France.

Briefly, Kroeber makes this neo-humanism a matter of democratic vision in the universal accessibility of meaningful experience; "freedom's harmony" as exemplified by Wordsworth's *Prelude* counterpoints Foscolo's attitude of a "compassionate rebel" as set forth in the epistolary novel *Le Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, and the rejection of the traditional idea of God variously leads all the poets in question to delve in a new sense of the Divine: a personal, this-worldly revelation, shared or sharable everywhere, and far from arrogantly rationalistic. If you behead God, as the French revolutionaries did, and enthrone Reason (in the very French shape of a pretty girl), you may end up in the flat positivism of Flaubert's pharmacist, Homais, for whom reality held no mystery, no problem, and thus no promise. Instead, Wordsworth, Keats, Leopardi and Foscolo, each in his own way, make you feel the dizzy depths opened up by that decapitation, and they develop "secular myths" verging on a new critique of nature and culture. Naturalist primitivism à la early Rousseau is discarded in favor of "the graces of civility," and civilization in turn is an individual reconquest and ideal, rather than a collectively given set of forms.

Mr. Kroeber ventures the proposition that his nineteenth-century poets thus announced a universalist culture, or *meta-culture*, to be sharply distinguished from eighteenth-century Enlightenment as well as from the nationalist formulations of some Romantics; and he stresses the historical "Mediterranean" element in that phase of European thought and art versus the primitivist or "Germanic" one. These may sound risky as generalizations, but they do spring from a concrete approach to the texts Kroeber examines, and they are anything but shallow. It will certainly pay to re-examine Mr. Thorslev's conception of Romanticism as the cult of a worldless, self-enclosed mind, in the light of Kroeber's contentions, which clearly relegate Thorslev's thesis to one aspect of the Romantic polarity—by implication the regressive one.

Kroeber's choice of poets, generationally and even thematically close but linguistically far apart, is telling. Perhaps he would have strengthened his point if he had cared to hint at the common heritage of Renaissance humanism which had drawn England so close to cultural Italy in an earlier age, for there is a chance that this heritage may have been subterraneanly operative even at the revolutionary time his book encompasses. Europe had been one before, and it was striving to be one again now, in the face of its own nationalistic dismemberment. If this dimension had been brought into Kroeber's focus of analysis, he would have seen that Foscolo and Keats belong more intimately with each other than with the rest of the foursome, not only because they share the myth of a lost Hellas as a Promised Land of the imagination, but also because they stick to a more elaborate style in keeping with the Renaissance humanist tradition. Foscolo writes like an Italian Milton, and Keats has been compared to

Shakespeare by a critic like Middleton Murry. Wordsworth and Leopardi have much in common, as Matthew Arnold once grudgingly saw, and I wish Kroeber had discussed *La vita solitaria* to clinch the point with regard to diction and vision, for it is here that Leopardi comes closest to Wordsworth's "bliss of solitude"; at other times, solitude is to him just grief and despair or resignation.

However, what sets the Italian solitary of Recanati apart from the dreamer of the Lake Country should have received stronger emphasis. Even if style, themes and attitudes overlap, there is in Leopardi a basically different tone, and it emerges in poems like "A se stesso" (To Himself) and "La Ginestra" (The Broom Flower). Leopardi is capable of denials from which Wordsworth would recoil, and his rare affirmations are more painfully earned. This much is true even if we agree with Kroeber's suggestion to view Leopardi as a tragic, rather than a pessimistic, writer; or rather, it springs directly from that recognition, for who would ever dare call Wordsworth "tragic"? What Wordsworth shares with Leopardi is important, but it is mainly the area of literary experience that Renato Poggioli would have called "pastoral of the self." There is an "idyllic" Leopardi (*Idylls* was the title of many of his *Canti*), and there is a tragic Leopardi who confronts an utterly denuded reality and the loss of all consoling certainties. He could never write "ecclesiastical sonnets." Between dreaminess and the horror of emptiness, he ranges far more deeply than Wordsworth does, and it shows in his style, too.

English and American men of letters have been rediscovering Leopardi in recent years, and I know of three anthologies of his verse and prose which are in the making or pretty close to publication, but I doubt that any English translator will equal John Heath-Stubbs' felicity. Jean-Pierre Barricelli, in his bilingual edition of the poems published by Las Americas two years ago, has kept him in mind, especially in the rendition of *The Infinite*, that most inviolable of poems—and it helped. Robert Lowell in *Imitations* has tried his hand at some of Leopardi's poems, including *The Infinite*, but these are not my favorites among Lowell's translations—or his original poems either. Of the American poets who translated *The Infinite*, I also remember Kenneth Rexroth, and more recently John Tagliabue. In 1955, Theodore Weiss edited a special number of *The Quarterly Review of Literature*, at Annandale-on-Hudson, entirely devoted to Leopardi, and he made very generous claims for the Italian poet, though the quality of some of the translations left something to be desired.

In view of that (and I should add Iris Origo's biography, and the translations of the poems respectively done by Bickelsteth and Whitfield in England) we can talk of a Leopardi revival in the English-speaking world, and Mr. Kroeber's claim that he is introducing Foscolo and Leopardi to the American readers bears revision—it certainly is truer of Foscolo than of the latter poet. In this regard, Mr. Kroeber should also have remembered that about fifteen years ago Mr. Emery Neff of Columbia University published a book on Romanticism as a European revolution, in which he aligned Foscolo, Leopardi and Manzoni with Hoelderlin, Keats, Wordsworth, Novalis and other representative writers of the period. It is true that Mr. Neff's larger range of inquiry made for less focus and depth than Mr. Kroeber now attains. And since I have mentioned English translations from Leopardi, let me add that one particularly interesting chapter in *The Artifice of Reality* is "Translation and Originality" in Part Two. Here the author convincingly demonstrates Foscolo's creativity as a translator

of the Greek classics, and the contiguousness of his translations to the original poetry in "The Sepulchers," an impassioned celebration of history as the endless struggle of man to retain and develop his cultural identity against destructive Nature, or of communal memory against oblivion and death. Several quotations or conscious echoes from Homer and Pindar are embedded in "The Sepulchers," much in the way contemporary poems of comparable scope, if not of comparable style, include quotations from a variety of classical and modern sources to dramatize their critical recapitulation of world history.

"Commemorative Prophecy," the apt title Kroeber uses to describe Keats' attitude in *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, can also describe Foscolo's structuring of vision in *The Sepulchers'* syntax. Kroeber's handling of technique shows to advantage in his discussion of "temporalized space" in "Tintern Abbey," "The Infinite," and "The Evening of the Holiday"; I would call this an example of literary phenomenology, in the sense in which I call Geoffrey Hartman a phenomenologist. Both critics can see the individual poem in itself, to the extent of inhabiting it—but without mistaking it for a prison. They also know how to relate it significantly to other poems and authors, and to the *Lebenswelt* or world of available experience which makes poems possible in the first place. This is enough to dispose of dogmatic claims to the effect that the critic is out of bounds when he ventures into areas which are not specifically literary. A poem is not a windowless monad; it is, rather, both a culmination of experience and its new beginning.

The questions with which one emerges from a reading of Mr. Kroeber's book are themselves evidence of its usefulness. I, for one, am not entirely convinced by his cautious comparison of Foscolo's novel about a fictional suicide to Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Foscolo's *Jacopo Ortis* is an immature, if remarkable, prelude to the author's poetical career (I consider it Foscolo's "infernal" phase, which was eventually to lead to the paradisaal phase of *The Graces*); Wordsworth's verse autobiography is the mature review of a poetical development. Elsewhere, Wordsworth identifies with his dead Lucy ("A slumber did my spirit seal . . .") to the extent that the line "No motion has she now, no force" can refer both to the dead girl and to his own spirit; likewise, Leopardi concludes a fine poem by identifying his dead Silvia with his own dead hope. But there is the difference: Wordsworth ends in "slumber," in dreamy identification with that cosmic Nature which was always hospitable to his yearning for communion, whereas Leopardi ends in despairing wakefulness, for to him Nature was as alien as it was deceptively beautiful. Wordsworth's effusiveness is in contrast to Leopardi's critical questioning. And Mr. Kroeber will be the first to admit that criticism itself is an endless questioning, beyond whatever firm recognitions it may foster. His sense of analogy is far from fanciful, as evidenced by the judicious sampling of focal texts for extended comment and widening inference. His book will remind a few of us that Europe speaks in many tongues, and yet can think in one language. Thus I would conclude by recommending it as a corollary to Eliot's "What is a Classic?" and Curtius' *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*.

GLAUCO CAMBON

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Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art by Margarete Bieber. Chicago: Argonaut Press, 1964. Pp. 88; pl. 63. \$7.50.

Miss Bieber, one of the few art historians capable of the task, sets out in this brief volume to identify the artists and works devoted to the portraiture of Alexander, to chronicle the changing concepts held of this nearly mythical figure as reflected in the portraits, to conjure up the lost masterpieces upon which the extant copies are based, and to demonstrate how the changing aesthetics of the late classical world continuously transformed the physical image of man. Her study, then, is both a documentary catalog and a critical appraisal.

Her previously published *History of the Greek and the Roman Theater* and *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age* are known to even the most casual reader in classical matters as standard reference works. And her *Laocoon* is of first importance to readers of this journal as a case study of changing attitudes in the history of criticism, based on the varied analyses and interpretations made of a single work of sculpture. The *Laocoon* is a model of its kind, a healthy corrective to the frequently austere, critical homiletics of today that modestly admit to no fault other than that of presenting the final answer. The present volume is of a different design, but a worthy companion.

Whatever else may be accomplished by the great or notorious around whom historical events cluster, they do give the artist rich fare for years, and centuries, after their deeds and personalities have moldered. It is a moot question whether *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* would have come into being had there been no *primum Praetor, deinde Consul, Imperator, moxque Rex C. Julius*; whether the Bayeux Tapestry would have been stitched without a William the Conqueror; whether *War and Peace* could have been conceived without a Napoleon; whether *The Deputy* could have been written without Hitler. But something as completely personal as a portrait entirely depends upon the uniqueness of the sitter, on the facts and fictions of his thoroughly individual personality, and on his cast of face. Alexander of Macedonia almost lived up to the heroic stature in which sculptors and painters of the succeeding centuries were to phrase him. His career contained all the elements to fire romance and imagination; scion of a provincial but energetic king, thrust into prominence by the early death of his father and the murderous ambitions of his mother, Alexander went on to conquer most of the known world before he reached thirty without losing a battle or the dog-like devotion of his exhausted troops. Espousing a one-world policy, he almost achieved for a brief moment the physical and cultural marriage of all nations before, appropriately, a fever truncated his astounding career at the age of thirty-two. During his lifetime he had been acclaimed king, then hero, and, finally, god. Probably we shall never know whether he affirmed his own divinity through self-delusion or through political expediency. Well, perhaps he was a god amongst men, for so generations of artists have celebrated him.

Miss Bieber begins with the earliest portraits of Alexander, those commissioned before he set out on his bloody, but sometimes compassionate path of world conquest. Here we must deal primarily with copies fortified with the literary descriptions of lost, presumed originals. "When Alexander became king he is said to have chosen the best artists of his time to portray him: Lysippos the sculptor, Apelles the painter, and Pyrgoteles the gem cutter." But, today we have

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to be satisfied with statues, if not by Lysippos, then in the Lysippean mode; with a late Roman mosaic that perhaps betrays the skilled tricks of foreshortening attributed to Apelles; and with Hellenistic (*i.e.* post-Alexandrian) gems perhaps influenced by Pyrgoteles. Neither the author nor the ancient Greek artists can be blamed for the loss of the original works which, of necessity, makes some aspects of Miss Bieber's conclusions somewhat problematical and the reproductions aesthetically less pleasing. For the work of a copyist, as Miss Bieber amply notes, is always something less than the original. The more than one hundred portraits of Alexander reproduced in the book are, admittedly, second and third rate works of art—that cannot be helped; but it is hardly excusable for the publisher of a book to be sold for \$7.50 to have produced such poor plates: dull, grey, ill-cropped, badly spaced.

The organization of the book is clear and precise: the chapters take up the successive phases of Alexander's career. A precis of the historical situation is followed by a detailed discussion of the portraits in each of the critical phases of Alexander's development from dream to realization, demonstrating how the conceptual aspect of the portrait changed and grew with the man. But perhaps of even greater importance than this special development is the broader picture of change in the concept of portraiture and in psychological penetration that is reflected in the portraits of the last phases of classical aesthetics, from the end of the fourth century B.C. to the third century A.D. Here, Miss Bieber's encyclopaedic knowledge of classical art and her complete control of the scholarly work in the field are of greatest service to the non-specialist.

Fellow workers in the field of late classical art and archaeology will undoubtedly disagree with some of the author's attributions and dates. So, for example, one still is hard put to see the face of Alexander in the cameo portrait in Vienna (plate II, figure 4). But the student of art criticism need not be troubled by these archaeological facets which, while of importance, do not seriously affect the thesis of the volume. The book shows how precise historical scholarship must and can be brought to bear in art criticism. The minor flaws in typography, organization of the illustrations, and details of format must be laid at the doorstep of the copy editor, not that of the author. If one may be permitted to wish for something more in this study, it is that Miss Bieber would have given us the advantage of her insight and skills of synthesis by adding a brief summary chapter that tied together the various implications of her story. Yet, one of Miss Bieber's virtues is that she says what has to be said with brevity and preciseness. In the hands of a less sure scholar these less than one hundred pages would have been expanded three-fold and have carried less weight.

BERNARD GOLDMAN

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Thomas Traherne: Mystic and Poet by K. W. Salter. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1965. Pp. 142. \$6.00.

Mr. Salter wishes to point out qualities in Traherne that may be "of use to a reader in our present times." It is Traherne's religious experience that Mr. Salter would point to. On the very threshold of the modern world, a mystical

"illumination" brought Traherne "first-hand experience of divine order in the world of things"; he saw that the end of human life "is not simply the discovery of reality; it is the enjoyment of reality . . ." (p. 7). Mr. Salter believes that Traherne, because he inherited important medieval traditions, was able to realize "a unifying principle in his life" (p. 11), and to achieve "balance" and "poise" (pp. 6, 15). Mr. Salter's principal interest in Traherne is in his achievement as mystic rather than as writer, either of prose or verse. The *Centuries* and the *Poems* are the subject of Mr. Salter's book, but he does not intend, he says, primarily to write "a work of literary criticism," or to make a contribution "to our knowledge of the beliefs and modes of thought of seventeenth-century England." Although he would thus subordinate his literary and historical interests, it is of these interests alone that the present reader is able to speak. The nature and quality of Traherne's experience can be discovered only in his words, but Mr. Salter's method is to slight rather than to emphasize Traherne's words. "Mysticism and poetry are, in certain respects, antagonistic" (p. 111). The "most pure form of mysticism . . . cannot be expressed in words. . . . it can only be alluded to" (p. 113). Mr. Salter is interested in Traherne's "substantial thought" rather than his "mode of expression," and the thought reveals itself to him partly by his finding it related to medieval scholasticism (pp. 10, 66), and to traditions represented by *The Cloud of the Unknowing* (pp. 112-113) and the works of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (pp. 98-101 and 122-129). In elucidating Traherne's thought Mr. Salter also frequently uses the words of modern poets. A comment on Traherne's feeling in *Century III*, 15, introduces radically different terms from Traherne's ("vain," "forlorn," "Dirt and Streets and Gutters") that must surely distort Traherne's experience. Mr. Salter writes that in *Century III*, 15, "The realization of the world of human society as a waste place, a comfortless wilderness, gives rise to an impulse to seek for meaning. . . ." (p. 31). Phrases from Wordsworth (pp. 40, 42, 55, 133), Eliot (pp. 70, 71, 112), Dylan Thomas (p. 92), and T. E. Hulme (pp. 130-135) are used freely as a method of elucidation.

Mr. Salter recognizes that Traherne's thought reflects not only "personal experience," but also the "prevailing movements in the thought and sensibility of his time" (p. 74). In Traherne, as in others of his time, Mr. Salter finds absent what had been an important element of feeling in the early seventeenth century, the "sense of humanity as the quintessence of dust" (p. 77). But while Traherne may seem to point toward "the confidence and optimism of eighteenth-century deism," Mr. Salter thinks he should be regarded rather "as an agent of resistance . . . his conviction is primarily of a supernatural spiritual reality from which all truth, beauty and goodness must proceed" (p. 79). A greater attention to certain words which Traherne repeatedly uses, rather than to convictions, thoughts, and doctrines, might have led Mr. Salter to a more coherent and consistent view of the place of Traherne's experience in history. Traherne can speak of man's "Enjoyment of the World" as the principal goal of a religious life. "Enjoyment," "felicity," or "happiness," (as well as "man," "reason," and "nature") are terms which in Traherne have a religious setting and a religious meaning. The continuing use of these terms in succeeding generations most clearly relates Traherne to the future. In new contexts the words will take on important new, and usually more secular meanings. The "pursuit of happiness" had in the eighteenth century lost most of the religious meaning

which it would have had for Traherne, but Traherne and his contemporaries had contributed to the development of the ideal by creating the language. One of Mr. Salter's most stimulating suggestions is that Traherne "would seem to fit completely into Hulme's definition of the romantic attitude" (p. 131). But Mr. Salter excuses the traces of "a Romantic Heresy" because of the high value which he attaches to Traherne's "splendid expression of a vivid sense of being one with the universe and yet at the same time an individual. . . ." It was through this expression that Traherne was able to make "his contribution to our knowledge of one of the kinds of supreme happiness possible to men" (p. 135). This parting compliment to the literary quality of Traherne's work reminds the reader of what he has already felt, that is, how much the discipline of literary criticism might have added to the value of Mr. Salter's book.

ALEXANDER SACKTON

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Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814 by Geoffrey H. Hartman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964. Pp. xii + 418. \$8.50.

The revaluations of the Romantic poets go forward, and, in fact, one phase of the latest critical revolution seems complete; one need no longer step back to the strictures of Eliot and Leavis and the New Criticism in order to get off the mark in the appreciation of the great English Romantics. Yet, Mr. Geoffrey H. Hartman, in his important new book, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, can claim, with complete justice, I think, that, "The Romantics have not yet completely succeeded in creating either the taste by which they might be enjoyed or the terms which best describe their practice." Mr. Hartman's book contributes mightily in creating that taste and in describing that practice.

Wordsworth is the crucial figure in any estimation of the Romantic movement, as he has been since the beginning. But we need to know what Wordsworth we are talking about and in what context we are reading him when we ponder his achievement. Wordsworth the poet of a sentimentalized nature (largely the creation of the effete Romanticism of the later nineteenth century, so vulgarly lampooned by Aldous Huxley) is not available to modern critical perspectives; nor, I think, can Wordsworth the Healer, the poet of Arnold and Mill, perform the same therapeutic task for wounded moderns. The "fitting and fitted" at which Blake spluttered in his marginalia makes the contemporary reader uneasy too, though not from the same viewpoint as Blake's. We sometimes find it difficult to shake the feeling of *mauvaise foi* in Wordsworth's poetic and philosophical solutions; we confuse the complacency of the later Wordsworth with the genuine egotistical sublime of the great years, and we fail to read him in the larger context in which his work demands to be placed; we stay provincial in our understanding, as Wordsworth was sometimes provincial in his. But the larger context is there, and in process of definition.

Mr. Hartman is not the only writer in recent years to seek new views of Wordsworth. The excellent work of David Ferry, Herbert Lindenberger, C. C. Clarke, Elizabeth Sewall and others has opened up a fresh context, literary and

historical, in which the magnitude of the Wordsworthian achievement can be examined. A tormented Wordsworth, a cunning Wordsworth, a profoundly experimental Wordsworth, a Wordsworth seen against a revitalized Rousseau, or Holderlin, or Rilke, a Wordsworth surprised from his Englishness into a continental grandeur—this the Wordsworth who has been emerging over the last ten years. I think Ferry's *The Limits of Mortality* is particularly striking here, an intuitive essay rather than a sustained and comprehensive work, which, however, goes to the heart of the matter: the profoundly ambiguous status of nature in Wordsworth's poetry. But Mr. Hartman sums up and goes beyond the previous work. Both as a philosophical critic and as a close student of rhetoric with a decent regard for the facts of literary history, he has presented us with a Wordsworth who is likely to dominate our appreciation for some time to come.

Mr. Hartman's study should be seen against his previous critical work for a full understanding of his method and direction. His first book, *The Unmediated Vision* (1954), and his article "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness'" (*The Centennial Review*, VI, 1962) furnish the grounds of his perspective on Wordsworth. In his first book, Mr. Hartman sought to combine the close analysis of individual texts from Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke, and Valéry with a philosophical examination of the sources and means from and by which each poet sought his artistic solutions. Following the Cartesian revolution, and moving beyond it, Mr. Hartman saw his selected poets as passing through experience without being able or willing to draw upon any of the accepted symbols of mediation, such as the imitation of Christ, and selecting as their only "text," nature, the body, and human consciousness. This study, which has been slowly making its way to the revolutionary work it is, gets a clarification in the later article when Mr. Hartman distinguishes between *self-consciousness* and that consciousness, redeemed by imagination, which is an antidote to itself. The place of Wordsworth in this scheme is central and fructifying, whether Mr. Hartman is examining the apocalyptic character of "Tintern Abbey" in *The Unmediated Vision* or the "consciousness about consciousness" of *The Prelude* in his new book. The standard views of the poet fall by the wayside, particularly the one that sees a lucid progression from the supposed pantheism of *Tintern Abbey* to the palinode of the *Intimations Ode*, where the "homely Nurse" represents an abandonment of earlier views, to a position, we are assured, where the stages of Childhood, Youth, and Maturity have won out—a conclusion the melancholy Jacques could not have bettered.

The Prelude must stand at the center of Wordsworth's work as his richest experiment in the possibilities of consciousness. This great poem, a work which, like Pascal's God ("you would not be seeking Me, had you not already found Me"), surprised the poet into his greatest moments, finds its best interpreter in Mr. Hartman, whose detailed analyses of the two key moments in the poem, the Alpine crossing in Book Six, and the ascent of Snowdon in Book Fourteen, are the most convincing I have read. Mr. Hartman does not find in these climaxes the marriage of mind and nature which Wordsworth promised in his prologue to *The Recluse*. This is no "spousal verse" (and the asexual character of Wordsworth's imagination belies the connubial metaphor), but the unbidden triumph of transmuted consciousness (imagination) over nature, the assertion of the essential autonomy of the creative act. These are apocalyptic encounters with the full range of consciousness itself, and Mr. Hartman demonstrates how Words-

worth fears and tries to avoid them, or attempts to change their names. The term "apocalyptic" is a source of some difficulty, and Mr. Hartman's working definition may not satisfy all hands: "By 'apocalyptic' I mean that there is an inner necessity to cast out nature, to extirpate everything apparently external to salvation, everything that might stand between the naked self and God, whatever risk in this to the self." This is flexible enough to work in the book and loose enough to bring Blake and Wordsworth together in an imaginary Spirit Dialogue, with Blake snapping that Wordsworth is of his party without knowing it, and the latter, "conciliating wrath," by asserting that nature is a merciful middle ground for them both. Particularly convincing is Mr. Hartman's treatment of the Alpine crossing, where the verses beginning, "Imagination—here the power so called/ Through sad incompetence of human speech," the middle part of the passage, are shown to have been written last, and Wordsworth to have discovered his true subject, *in the act of composition*, "before the eye and progress of my song" (1805 text). "The (literal) traveller of 1790 becomes the (mental) traveller at the moment of composition . . . and is cut off from nature by imagination." Similarly, in the climactic Snowdon episode Mr. Hartman shows how Wordsworth once more encounters imagination, though he calls it nature, and thus avoids once more the implications of an apocalyptic self-consciousness.

The subtlety and precision of this argument cannot be paraphrased here, but the significance of Mr. Hartman's discoveries may be fairly stated and extrapolated from. Wordsworth, understood as a poet of transmuted consciousness and not as a poet of nature, understood as a poet whose tensions and strengths come from the conflict he himself thought was a comfort, relates to and is supported by the poetry that has come after him and which stays vital for us now. In fact, the essentially heroic character of the Wordsworthian enterprise emerges in full splendor. The elusive major man sought by Wallace Stevens in "Notes Toward A Supreme Fiction" or the Faust of Paul Valéry, asserting the primacy of the act of perception itself, are familiar modern examples of the "unmediated vision," but Stevens's ironical bridge beyond the self and Valéry's solipsistic joy in the ultimate interchangeability of all things were not Wordsworth's, who deeply wanted to believe that the self and nature, "that region which forms the object of purely physical science, and appears to fall outside of all mind" (F. H. Bradley), were reconcilable, were one. Wordsworth is the last great poet operating from such a belief, and he is the first great poet in whom the typically modern wound in consciousness is felt.

I do not want to give the impression that *The Prelude* is the sole object of concern in Mr. Hartman's book. There are fine pages on the shorter poems, a brilliant examination of the blank verse fragments that led to *The Prelude*, and a restrained account of the later poems, including *The Excursion*, which seems to me exemplary in its humanity and profound in its analysis of the decline. Wordsworth is perhaps not the remote and misunderstood figure that Blake once was, but he is improperly read. I would think and hope that Mr. Hartman's study will have the same effect on the understanding of Wordsworth that Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* has had on the study of Blake. We need criticism of this order to join in the Spirit Dialogues, if only at a distance.

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The Suspect in Poetry by James Dickey. Madison, Minnesota: Sixties Press, 1964. Pp. 120. \$2.00.

The Suspect in Poetry, a thin volume printed in the Republic of Ireland, is largely a collection of reviews which James Dickey contributed to a variety of quarterlies over some six years. Three polemical essays subdivide the volume into the main section, physically if not logically (how well, one wonders, does Kenneth Patchen, for instance, a writer of "pure or crude imagination" [p. 59], fit into "The Second Birth" grouping of "made," not "born," poets?), and attempt to unify it. A bold interpretation of the state of contemporary poetry is offered first in the resolute title essay and resumed in an unhappy finale which, like many another sermon, turns out to be a shrill *apologia pro vita sua* rather than an apology for the lonely joys of non-suspect poetry.

In these reviews Dickey capitalizes on verbal brilliancy. Occasionally he can be careless (when, for example, he crowds four *of's* in less than one line); or gratuitously rhetorical (especially in the way he finishes off a review, the ending of the piece on Logan being nearly memorable)—so much so that one hopes sometimes for an intentional ironic turn. Still, he does know how to amuse the reader with trenchant epigrammatic formulas and poignant aspersions: "*Howl* is the skin of Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer* thrown over the conventional maunderings of one type of American adolescent, who has discovered that machine civilization has no interest in his having read Blake." (pp. 16-17) Expressions of this sort, strewn by the dozen over the one hundred and twenty pages, certainly do not fail to delight and impress the reader. They fail, however, to divert him while the distinctive critical view defended with some vehemence in the opening essay is being, on the whole fortunately, but unaccountably, modified and finally qualified out of existence.

Dickey's main contention is that American poetry has grown "genteel and almost suffocatingly proper" (p. 17), a matter of learnable contrivance, at the expense of godlike directness and honest communication. Winters and Stevens are docketed as chief culprits in the present situation, and, one would say, for not so different reasons: the former for "the sober constipation" (p. 49) he has brought about in his school; the latter for the "debilitated kind of puzzle-making sterility" he has induced, "where to overcomplicate and then resolve is considered the criterion of artistic excellence." (p. 22) Thom Gunn, chiefest suspect because chief victim of the fasion (although, admittedly, he "resembles Stevens no more than he does, say, Yvor Winters" [p. 22]), is made the type of it and the villain of the book in one of the very few really controversial pieces. And the abandon of the young Frenchmen and South Americans, or the elsewhere censured "confession" of the beats, are tentatively and half-heartedly offered as a solution.

No doubt a review of reviews is likely to oversimplify the author's own ideas. But Dickey's diagnosis is too one-sided, the explanation too naive in its determinism, and the remedy too desperate to be taken seriously—even by Dickey himself. As a matter of fact, he soon relinquishes his position: his verdicts mostly coincide with previous critical recognitions, regardless of whether the poets concerned fit his program for "human," "unliterary" innocence or not. Roethke and Jarrell, Cummings and Nemerov, Rexroth, and Berryman, all emerge as "fine" poets, oddly enough; and Conquest and Larkin along with them, even more oddly, given Dickey's pronounced distaste for Thom Gunn.

For the puzzling shift of standards no justification is given. This fact, together with the fact that the reviews tend to talk generically *around* the poets rather than *of* them, does not make this sort of treatment very rewarding. Theodore Roethke is "the finest poet now writing in English"; but the buoyant one-page review (of *Words for the Wind*, 1961) stops at an evasive, though rhetorically effective, celebration of the "perpetual genesis" "that Roethke has *somehow* got down in words." (p. 58. Italics mine) Randall Jarrell is "an honest, witty, intelligent, and deeply gifted man" "writing about real things" (pp. 73-74); but the essay wanders into an amateurish disquisition on "reality," without sounding less approximate for all its eleven pages, or without achieving any dialectic development for all its dialogue form. And Howard Nemerov, "the best poet under forty-five that we have, with the possible exception of Richard Wilbur" (p. 63), in Dickey's second review of him is summarily disposed of in four sentences wedged between discursions on the poetic destiny of his generation and Auden's notion of the "censor." A tragic humor is what Dickey, safely enough, singles out as Nemerov's characteristic trait, thereupon concluding: "I won't go on and on, and I won't name what I think are Mr. Nemerov's best poems, for I want each reader to find them for himself, and for (*sic*) all opinions to differ and for (*sic*) each beholder to defend his own view, if necessary with his life." (p. 67) One can't help wondering about the writer's own sense of the quality he has just been praising, and about his idea of personal, militant criticism.

Distinctive readings of the various poems, new specific insights into the various poetries—these are no more abundant in *The Suspect* than are consistent criteria. Separate essays can be effective where the subject arouses the sympathy or distaste of the author—see, for instance the rhapsodies on Kenneth Patchen, Hayden Carruth, William Stafford and, yes, Theodore Roethke, or the attack on the disciples of Yvor Winters. Yet, this occasional effectiveness, relying mainly on a shrewdly rhetorical execution, fails to distinguish *The Suspect* from a collection of indifferent reviews making as dubious a claim to unity as to thoroughness. Faced with such a collection, one finds oneself—despite the conspicuous verbal poignancy, and also despite the many admonitions proffered to the poets themselves in a uniquely unabashed didactic tone—questioning its necessity.

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The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel by Arthur Mizener. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964. Pp. ix + 291. \$2.50.

Mr. Arthur Mizener is one of a triumvirate of the "New Reviewers" (the other two are Irving Howe and Norman Podhoretz) who are pilloried by Renata Adler in the *New Yorker* this last summer in a lengthy essay-review as "polemists" rather than critics. On Miss Adler's showing—and *The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel* is her *pièce de résistance* so far as Mizener is concerned—the charge is inapplicable to him; she herself concedes that, of the three, he is "the least polemical and the least interesting." Then she further reduces the sting with a sour milk poultice: The effect of his study of the modern American

novel is "that of a benign, unanalytical book column in a reviewing section of the Sunday newspapers, to which Mr. Mizener is a frequent contributor. . . . Mizener subordinates himself so completely to the works he admires that his intelligence becomes invisible." That is, Mr. Mizener's effort is so negligible that to group him with the other two seems irresponsible, if not vindictive. Whatever else Mizener is, he is not a polemist, especially in this book.

The fact is that one has to dig for the thesis in *The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel*. The author seems to be struggling with a division of modern American novelists into those who, like Dos Passos, present a sense of life by heavy social documentation, and those who, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, intuitively epitomize their times through their sensibilities, achieving a higher sense of reality. The book is capped by a study of *The Fathers* by Allen Tate who, to Mr. Mizener's satisfaction, exhibits both propensities in just the right proportions. But there are essays in which this connecting thread seems broken or missing. They were composed plainly for periodical publication and afterwards the thesis was dripped thinly and irregularly over them as if they were a stale cake hastily disguised for unexpected guests. The pieces reserved for the host and hostess, the misleading pieces on Trollope and Hardy (for, placed first, one expects them to have some significant relation to the rest of the offering), get no drip at all, and Mr. Mizener forgets them completely in the rest of the book. He could, with more cogency, have begun his book with essays contrasting Wells and Conrad, whom he introduces casually and incidentally later.

There is something in Miss Adler's charge of blandness and studied inoffensiveness. She was probably irritated by the lack of any sharp analytical dissent in Mr. Mizener's study. He is wholly happy to point out the excellencies of his authors, and while he quotes a large number of other critics, it is always to agree and effusively commend them. One gets a rather Fabian and arm-chair, pipe-and-slippers "sense of life" from the book, and, because the title raises other expectations, one surmises evasiveness in the author. Anger follows. The assertion that Mr. Mizener's intelligence is "invisible" is a product of this irritation, rather than of examination, for while one looks in vain for a brilliant new approach, the writing glitters like a gown with rhinestones. It is a good point that Trollope's villains suffer largely from self-deception, and another that, quite paradoxically, Sinclair Lewis had "an inadequate sense of life." Mizener has some wonderful phrases for Hemingway: "old two-gun Ernie," "this cross between Teddy Roosevelt, and a character invented by Richard Harding Davis," and "Childe Harold of the First World War." Mizener argues that even California, as Steinbeck illustrates, has pride in its history; "it is a misconception imposed on literary history by the public-relations talents of Southerners that only the American South has an awareness of its past." He detects two Faulkners: he is romantic when he invokes any comparison between his section and the outside world; a sharp realist in the closed context of the deep South. He understands the problem that the over-intellectual Glass children have in keeping contacts outside the Glass family. There is more; still one does not find in this book a convincing reflection of the man and artist who wrote *The Far Side of Paradise*. The integument is gone, zest is gone. Irretrievably? I think not; but Miss Adler is terribly right on one point—the reviewer has sapped the strength of the critic.

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Adams,
Baldam:
Belz, C
Braun,
Cadbur

Carlisle

Day, R
Garab,

Hagan
Joseph

Kraft,
Manse
Perry,
Pizer,

Reple
Schwa
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