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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Mark Twain-Howells Letters: The Correspondence of Samuel L. Clemens and William D. Howells, 1872-1910, ed. Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2 vols., 1960. Pp. xxv + 948. \$20.00.

Stephen Crane: Letters, ed. R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes. New York: New York University Press, 1960. Pp. xxx + 366. \$6.50.

The story unfolded, revealed in the letters of Howells and Mark Twain may not be "the saddest story," but it is the saddest one I have read for a long time. I should say "experienced," not "read," for the story is not so much *told* as hinted, suggested, reported, and analyzed—by the participants. Much of the action occurs offstage: we hear about the events, we seem to hear distant cries, we read Mark Twain's report and comment and Howells's sympathetic response. As James said he wanted to do, these letters make us *imagine*.

What we imagine is sad almost without relief, certainly with no final uplift in the manner of classic tragic drama: sad to the end, the saddest of all at the end, desolating. Everything, we finally come to feel, every hope and plan, almost every creative effort even (I am speaking now of the impression we have as we finish the two large volumes, not in strict, exact terms: *Huckleberry Finn* is far in the past)—everything has run out, disappeared, evaporated, faded, died. The eagerly planned trips have never been taken, the promised visits never made, the much discussed books never written.

The energies have been misapplied, the hopes misplaced. For years Mark Twain has been trying to get out of the literary business: would have long since if he had made the millions he hoped to make by the typesetter. Wanting above all to be rich, he achieved his second fortune only after it was too late to enjoy it—too many of those he loved were gone by then. So he builds Stormfield and plays billiards far into the night.

The triumphs—chiefly *Huckleberry Finn*—came without foresight or understanding, or even full realization afterward of what had been done. The creative satisfactions they brought were fleeting, and as they faded into the past—a past that came to seem less and less real, like someone else's past—they were the source not of continued satisfaction but of discontent, for they could not be repeated. Along with many other memories, they became symbols of loss—lost power, lost happiness, lost innocence and youth.

No wonder Mark Twain asked "What is man?" and replied in despair so bitter that his answer was incoherent. His "philosophizing" toward the end of his life is of course not significant as philosophy. It is an anguished cry from the heart. But it has its own emotional coherence and meaning, and seems, at least to this reader of the letters, entirely fitting and proper, in view of *all* the circumstances.

The despair of Mark Twain's later years is often referred to by scholars as though it could be accounted for simply in terms of peculiar misfortunes of Mark Twain's—the deaths of several of those most dear to him before his own—and had no relevance to the common human destiny. There are many stratagems by which the self protects itself from awareness of what it cannot bear to know, and this is a scholarly version of one of them. The impression I had as I finished these letters is, as I said, that this was the saddest story, but also that, in a very real and fundamental sense, it was and is *man's* story. Like a well-written novel, the letters motivate, prepare us for, and finally make us share and agree with the interpretations, the meanings, they culminate in. I do not, thank God, in my ordinary, everyday, working self share Mark Twain's religious beliefs: but within the context in which he had to think—the only context there was for him—I do not see how he could have thought otherwise.

His nihilism has therefore not only the dignity of being one possible honest reaction to life—so many philosophies and theologies are patently *not* honest but only transparent stratagems—but of being, so far as I can see, the only possible fully honest one for him. Apart from the consolation of religious faith, what significant mitigation of the tragedy of the human situation is there? Mark Twain was too sensitive to be unaware of tragedy, and too honest to deny what his experience seemed to imply. Religious faith as he knew it seemed ruled out by the best modern thought. He was too intelligent—even if no philosopher—to share the mindless optimism of those consoled by the notion of “progress,” even though he was a firm believer in progress.

What was left as a real possibility was despair. Those who would dismiss his negations as a mere idiosyncrasy had better have some good answers ready, not to the superficial determinism and materialism of his attempts at philosophy but to the meanings implicit in his life, as revealed in these letters.

Apart from such impressions as these, I am not aware of having learned anything new from reading these volumes—with one exception, and that concerns Howells, not Mark Twain. Of course there is a great deal of factual information here that I had not known before—and for the most part cannot recall now. It is always there where and when we need it: the volumes are magnificently edited, a triumph of taste and tact and scholarship. What I mean when I say that I learned nothing new is that apart from details of biography which I have neither the ability nor even the desire to remember, no new picture of Mark Twain emerges, no surprising revelation of how he produced his books or what he meant by them or what he was like as a person. Most of the essential facts about Mark Twain are apparently already known. What is lacking, where anything *is* lacking, is only an adequate response and interpretation. The story has been fully told. What does it mean?

The exception I mentioned above to the statement that I didn't *learn* anything in the course of the moving experience of reading straight through these volumes is this: I had not realized the extent to which Howells shared Mark Twain's point of view—even, in a sense, his despair. (But Howells was so much more controlled, poised, “mature,” prudential a man than Mark Twain that in him it never quite comes to despair. He knows very well what Mark Twain means, but he is determined himself not to feel *that* emotion, and he arranges not to.) *My Mark Twain*, it would seem, is not wholly candid: or let us say that its

voice is that of the official Howells, editor, popular novelist, academician, dean of American letters. In it Howells gives Mark Twain the highest possible praise, even overstating his achievement as a writer and the universality of his genius; but also carefully dissociating himself from Mark Twain's point of view, his unpopular "errors" of philosophy.

I do not suppose we need to assume any conscious hypocrisy on Howells's part: rather, that he lived different roles and spoke in different voices. But the letters make the hearty tone of the book ring pretty hollow. Obviously Howells was trying to cheer somebody up, himself or the public or both. The conclusion with its emotionally charged theistic language from one who had long since given up theism—"the Mystery," "the Searcher of hearts," "the God who"—comes close to being cant. If it is saved from seeming so, it is only because we feel Howells was overwrought by the intensity and genuineness of his grief for his friend.

What the letters show us is that not only did the family experiences run more or less parallel but the interpretations of them, and of life in general, were following parallel courses, too. There is a very dark tinge to Howells's naturalism in the later years, darker than I had realized. He buried himself in activity, writing novel after novel on a tight schedule, busying himself with good works and causes—all, it would seem, to ward off despair. If he succeeded in avoiding it, as I guess he did, it was surely by a narrow margin; and in its place he suffered what is perhaps less agonizing but also less heroic, simple depression. He was the perfect friend for Mark Twain even though—and here the letters simply confirm what we already knew—less great both as a writer and as a man.

The other volume of letters introduced to me for comment is much less interesting, and I shall deal with it briefly. Stephen Crane is a minor writer beside Mark Twain, and even beside Howells. And not only a lesser writer but a far lesser man than either of them. Mark Twain has genius; Howells has a deep and wide-ranging intelligence and responsiveness; Crane has a certain talent, an ability to dramatize himself, a certain freshness and originality, both in his person and in his works. He wrote several things that are quite fine. But I doubt that he would have done anything as good again if he had lived longer.

His untimely death makes him a romantic figure. But the defects in most of his works may be related to the ignorance, the empty and rather childish poses and *chic* rebellions we see in the letters. When we read the letters of Mark Twain and Howells we are in the world of Job and Oedipus and the crucifixion; when we read Stephen Crane our horizons contract to the negations of the 1890's. Methodism becomes an issue, and temperance and cigarette smoking become moral problems, and fraternities loom large. It is simply a different world from what we have been in, smaller, less significant. The light these letters throw on Crane does not enhance his stature.

There is, though, one connection between these two works. Mark Twain, Howells, Crane—all defined man in fundamentally similar terms. All broke off the question "What is man?" without completing it—"that Thou art mindful of him." Crane was probably the most "humanistic" in the modern sense, Howells the most pragmatic, Mark Twain, at least on the level of conscious, rational thought, the most mechanistic and materialistic and so, from our point of view, the least defensible. But he was also, I think, despite his extremely emotional

negations, the one closest to the sources of any really viable affirmation. His despair must be taken seriously, as we cannot take Crane's puerile rebellions.

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HYATT H. WAGGONER

From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad: Essays Collected in Memory of James T. Hillhouse, ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958. Pp. ix + 326. \$5.75.

At an informal meeting someone once questioned Dylan Thomas on "the richer levels of meanings" in poetry, whereupon he exclaimed: "Oh God, isn't an education wonderful!" Seeing his questioner rather put out, he hastened to explain that he had meant it as a compliment for "saying things so well." Perhaps one has a somewhat similar reaction to this volume of essays. It is wonderful; there is genuine pleasure at finding so much of substance and worth and at having it said so well. Still, some pieces do deserve a muted "Oh God!"

There are twenty-odd essays on the novelists of the last century—with some of the major novelists rating two—and an introduction and a conclusion, each by one of the editors, describing the novel before and after that century. That tells the arbitrary limits of the book, but within these there is much variety both in choice of subject matter and approach. Alan McKillop in an essay on *Northanger Abbey* shows how the heroine's playful remarks on novel-writing reveal an important side of her character and thereby fortify the structure of the entire novel. George Ford, writing on *Bleak House*, describes how it "could be reduced to the terms of beast-fables such as the story of the grasshopper and the ant or of the spider and the bee," and from that he moves into Victorian assumptions concerning man's social responsibilities. There is an excellent essay by Robert Heilman on "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic," depicting the transformation of a received convention into something dramatically immediate and, at the same time, amenable to the Victorian version of the metaphysical shudder. Again, a piece on Charles Reade's *Christie Johnstone* by Wayne Burns relies on biographical material to point up the psychological and social dilemmas posed by that novel. Perhaps the most spectacular essay is John Holloway's on "Hardy's Major Fiction," in which he argues persuasively that the portrayal of rural life shows "a gathering realization that that earlier way did not possess the inner resources upon which to make a real fight for its existence." There are also excellent and amusing essays by Douglas Bush on Dickens and Arthur Mizener on Trollope, devoted to subtle analyses of character.

If one regards the essays in this collection as a fair cross-section of modern scholarship and criticism, as seems reasonable, one is heartened by the fact that no critical dogma dominates, but that, rather, the critic's individual vision and imaginative (as well as affectionate) hold of his material lead again and again to an enlargement of our understanding. Should one nevertheless dare single out one strain from such plenty, the best results seem to accrue from looking at the

major characters with redoubled care—and often at those that were thought to be uncomplicated—and from noting the specific attitudes the authors display toward them. None of the more interesting characters is a paragon; rather, each has to stand trial, as it were, during the course of the novel for the author's changing and slowly hardening opinion of him. David Daiches' essay on Scott's *Redgauntlet* illustrates this well. He shows how Scott was "concerned with the mutations of heroism" and how he set himself the task of working out "the validity and implications of different attitudes toward Scotland's past and present." The same may be said for W. Y. Tindall's discussion of Conrad's Marlow, whose "sentimental irony" and "middle-aged nostalgia" embody Conrad's crucial comments on "the Victorian gentleman." It may be characteristic of the modern view that characters in novels are seen not so much as creations, with the novelist as creator making his omniscient presence felt now through one, now through another of his "children," addressing the reader with explanations of what he was doing or aiming to do, but rather as a knowing manipulator of instruments, who at best smartly exploits the full range and depth of each. Fortunately, such a mechanistic view, laying excessive stress on technique, is, as I have said, more often than not tempered by a genuine and quite personal affection for the given novelist.

A recurrent concern of the contributors to this volume lies, furthermore, not only with the authors' attitudes toward their heroes, but even more with their attitude toward the reader, most openly shown by the chatty asides in the vocative case, the unblushing assumption of the role of moralist instructing an audience eager for the word, and the block descriptions of character and panorama. If Thackeray and Trollope are the most notorious offenders, it can be shown, as Arthur Mizener does in discussing the latter's *Palliser Novels*, that the commentary on the story as well as the "in-gathering" of the readers supply "the balancing and ironic judgment of common sense." The overt novelist-reader relationships then are best read as a device serving, in the successful novel, the dramatic reinforcement of the theme or plot—in short, as a kind of metaphor. Modern taste squirms at the intermittent intrusions of the author, but, so several contributors would agree, the fault is ours for regarding this convention as an extrinsic appeal and not part and parcel of the novelist's viable resources. But not always were these devices successful, and one contributor, J. Y. T. Greig, is led to assert that Thackeray's many "fustian annotations" indicate he was "not a born novelist."

It is not difficult to isolate the less rewarding critical approaches if one maintains that above all the novel itself be served. Discussions of the author's philosophical position, or a search into the accuracy of historical matters used by him, or a search into the "originals" of certain characters, or again an unconsummated tracing of influence—these are undeniably interesting in Arnold's sense, but one cannot help feeling that the critic's job of judging wisely is evaded (or merely postponed?) and that the blurring of a line between two disciplines obviously blurs each. Some contributors proceed as though the major unfinished business of modern criticism consisted in demonstrating that a given novelist was more existential than he or his readers knew him to be. Reservations may also be made about the introductory essay, which outlines the development of the novel in earlier centuries: this has been done many times and in any case would be more

appropriate to a textbook than a *Festschrift*. One looks to the concluding essay for a summing up of practices in, or criticism of, the 19th-century novel as a whole; instead, there is a cursory discussion of subsequent changes in the novel. While stimulating in parts, this discussion is markedly unresponsive to the bulk of what preceded. Bracketing the quite specialized central studies with a literary-historical set of essays seems to put wrinkles in the unity of the volume.

The picture of the novel, finally, that emerges from those more probing pieces is a novel palpitant with ideas, with causes, with "having something to say." There are indirect reminders that the courage to say the obvious often leads to the tellingly individual. Two important concerns stand out: the reworking of history into dramatic immediacy (possibly as a bulwark against scientific encroachments upon an orderly universe) and the extent of man's obligations to his fellow-man. Again, the critics implicitly agree that experimentation with the *form* of the novel was sparse, that its success lay with the manifold exploration of a form. It is as though the self-assurance generated by having a sizable, devoted reading public provided the novelists with *Lebensraum* which they knew what to do with. If it made some a trifle smug and condescending, it enabled others to raise the novel to the dominant genre. We have to thank the editors and the contributors for their efforts in presenting the novel as a product of abundance and in reminding us that it merits our continued admiration for a purposeful harnessing of that abundance.

ALEX PAGE

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Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History, ed. Roger S. Loomis. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1959. Pp. xvi + 574. \$10.10.

James Douglas Bruce's two-volume *Evolution of Arthurian Romance* appeared in 1923. It was a monumental task, the painstakingly thorough result of many years of studying and teaching Medieval literature in general and the Arthurian legend in particular. In its encouragement of further and accelerated study of Arthurian literature, Bruce's work no doubt hastened its own obsolescence; from only a few years after its publication scholars have lamented that no one has undertaken to revise it and bring it abreast of the scholarship that it encouraged. Professor R. S. Loomis's *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, despite its importance and its considerable merit, will probably not be thought by many to fulfill this need.

As its subtitle states, this is a "collaborative" history, comprised of forty-one essays by thirty hands, on subjects ranging from the historicity of Arthur, through the labyrinthine development of a literature centering around that hero and his knights, to the influence of the material upon spectacle and sport during the middle ages. It invites, of course, precisely the criticism that a collaborative history would invite, and precisely that which Professor Loomis anticipates in his Prologue: "Single authorship, if it were possible, would have produced greater consistency and cohesion and better proportioning." But if it is not quite fair to criticize the whole of the work in terms of defects which are clearly

anticipated, frankly acknowledged, and well nigh inevitable, there is a great deal that needs to be said about its separate parts—so much, in fact, that probably no single review will do complete justice to either the merits or the faults of even a handful of these separate parts.

One aspect of the world of Arthurian scholarship which probably even the most casual reader will not fail to see reflected in these essays is the fact that it is often as competitive and sometimes as acrimonious as many aspects of the modern business world. These qualities are usually muted by being relegated to footnotes, true enough; but they are nevertheless very real and more often than not their effect is to deteriorate an argument rather than enhance it. To cite but one of many examples, in the first essay, "The Arthur of History," Professor K. H. Jackson identifies some of Arthur's battle sites described in Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*. Then, referring in a footnote to F. Lot's previous identifications, Jackson comments that where these differ from his own, "they are worthless, like all Lot's essays in Celtic philology" (p. 4).

Another aspect of Arthurian scholarship that the reader will quickly discover is the marked degree to which it often indulges in sheer speculation. Given a literature more of which is probably lost than survives, this will excite little surprise, but the results are sometimes startling. Following a proposal of H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, Jackson notes that Nennius's version of the Arthur story is likely to have its source in Welsh lore, and he calls attention to several early Welsh "catalogue" poems which are more closely parallel with Nennius than that cited originally by the Chadwicks. However speculative, this is an interesting and highly plausible hypothesis in solving the perplexing question of Nennius's sources; it was fairly generally accepted as such when the Chadwicks advanced it, and Jackson's additional evidence should certainly bolster its probability. To go further, however, and try to explain such details as the number (960) of warriors killed by Arthur in the battle of Guinnion, requires a compounding of hypothesis that rests on ground as quick-sandy as that of Vortigern's attempted castle-building at Dinas Emrys. No one interested in Arthurian literature will object greatly to a scholar's posing an "X" source where no other explanation is available (though the possibility of invention is too regularly ignored), but perhaps the further assumption of a writer's hypothetical misreading of his hypothetical source verges too far into the realm of ingenuity. It is through just such a process, at any rate, that Jackson accounts for Nennius's assigning 960 as the number of Arthur's victims:

It is probable therefore that Nennius had before him a written text, or knew an oral version, of a Welsh poem cataloguing Arthur's deeds in similar vein. . . . Indeed the figure 960 looks very like a corruption of the sort of number that was traditional in Welsh eulogistic verse; 120 was commonly the size of a chief's war-band, and an army consisting of three such bands would be quite natural. The British army of Gododdin is given usually as 300, or 300 with 3 chiefs, i. e. 3 war-bands of 100 plus a leader. Probably the original figure was *dcccclx*, 3 times 303, misread by Nennius as *dcccclx*. (p. 7)

Ironically, Jackson can say of another's argument on a different point that it was an idea "ingeniously urged by Collingwood, in an argument which it would be an understatement to call 'imaginative'" (p. 9).

An occasional acrimonious footnote, however, or for that matter a sometimes highly speculative argument, will probably trouble very little the fairly specialized audience of Arthurian scholars for whom this book is primarily intended. More troublesome will be what seems to me the generally extreme partisanship of the book. As its greatest single contributor, Professor Loomis himself has argued in several books and numerous articles that the Arthur legend springs ultimately from Celtic lore—"a flourishing body of tradition, both oral and written, of which Arthur had become the central figure by 1100 at latest" (p. 52). This is well and good, of course, and perfectly consistent with the whole of Loomis's long and distinguished career in Arthurian scholarship. But to judge from his essays here, or from the fact that none of the other contributors gives any indication of dissenting very seriously from the theory of Celtic origins (especially of the Grail legend), one would scarcely guess that there are other thriving theories (Christian and Ritual origins) which also have distinguished and persuasive adherents. J. D. Bruce was as dedicated to the theory of Christian origin as Loomis is to the Celtic theory; but in his work we find a presentation of the alternatives which is, if not entirely impartial, at least informative and reasonably fair in its thoroughness.

The controversy over the origins of the Arthur story is an old one, of course; more immediately indicative of the partisanship which seems to me to characterize the book is Professor Vinaver's essay on Sir Thomas Malory (pp. 541-552). In his edition of the Winchester MS of the *Morte Darthur* (*The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols., Oxford, 1947), Vinaver argued that Malory conceived and wrote his "works" as separate romances, with no intention that these should be construed as forming a unified narrative—as, in fact, the book had been construed from Caxton's time to the publication of the Winchester MS. Vinaver does little more than restate that argument here, dismissing a very considerable body of scholarly objection with the casual comment that

recent critics have tried to revert to the notion of the organic unity of the collection as a whole, only to find themselves ignoring not only Malory's explicit statements and Caxton's implied admissions . . . , but the fact that the whole of the middle portion . . . is unrelated to any of the themes which occur before or after. (p. 544)

The fact of the matter is that these critics have not "ignored" any of the evidence upon which Vinaver's case is built; they have simply interpreted that evidence in other, and to me, sounder ways.

Though one hesitates to be too picayunish in dealing with a work of this size and scope, there are also in the book a good number of petty annoyances which should have been eliminated at some stage of the proof-reading. On p. 140 we find an awkward agreement: "The emotional vigour of Bérout's account are consequent upon the style that he has adopted." Footnotes on pp. 134, 135, and 327 erroneously refer to notes on pp. 121 and 261 instead of 122 and 325 respectively. One looks in vain for any mention of "Dinas Emreis" on (or near) p. 43, where, according to the index, it should be found.

Despite all this, the book contains some very fine and useful essays. Professor Helaine Newstead is, as usual, beautifully terse and thorough in her statement of the growth of the Tristan legend (pp. 122-133); given the vigor of the many

controversies centering around the life, work, and influence of Chrétien de Troyes, Professor Frappier's essay (pp. 157-191) is carefully reserved and—except for his neglect of U. T. Holmes, Jr.—eminently fair; Professor Ackerman's essay on the Middle English rimed and prose romances (pp. 480-519) will be particularly helpful in directing attention again to a segment of Arthurian romance that has not received its due share of scholarly attention for several years.

On the whole, then, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* is uneven. If we bear in mind the fact that it is a "collaborative history," much must be forgiven, and I am sure that I have not given its many merits the positive emphasis they deserve. On the other hand, the book is, as I see it, primarily a "collaborative history"; and from this point of view it seems to me that the individual collaborators are all too prone to overlook entirely the conflicting theories of other reputable scholars. The reader is entitled to know, in other words, that a great many of the matters treated here are not settled—that they are, instead, highly debatable and much debated. Further, he is entitled to know what the alternative theories are and where to find fuller statements of them. This is already a very large book, but the kind of thing I am thinking of would often have required little more than the usual scholarly open-mindedness of a footnote beginning, "For an opposite view, see. . ."

T. C. RUMBLE

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The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance by Alvin Kernan. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959. Pp. x + 261. \$5.00.

Elizabethan satire is a more important subject than it might at first seem to one not particularly concerned with it. Critical theory and literary history apart, the pamphlets of Nashe and Martin Marprelate and the comedies of Jonson remain simply delightful, and the verse satires of Donne and of Hall are at least respectable. Elizabethan dramatic and prose satire has assumed special importance for critical theory since its connection with the rise of capitalism has been made the subject of what is perhaps the outstanding example of Marxist criticism in English, L. C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (1936). For literary history Elizabethan satire has seemed one of the clearest symptoms of the change in temper between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Alvin Kernan's book, *The Cankered Muse*, is a description of the accepted corpus of Elizabethan satire in terms of its author's theory of satire, with little attention to the sociological or cultural significance of that corpus. Kernan's theory of satire is simple, clear, and neatly expounded. Like the majority of modern critics, Kernan slights Dryden's distinction between gentle Horatian and savage Juvenalian satire and takes the latter as the norm. Unlike his most immediate predecessors, John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (1956), and James Sutherland, *English Satire* (1958), he does not attempt to divide the more sophisticated and literary satire from the direct and primitive complaint or denunciation, but defines the genre simply as "attack" and accepts

the whole range. Satire thus defined, its three elements are then discussed. "The scene of satire," Kernan says, "is always disorderly and crowded," and he cites Juvenal's Rome, Langland's "felde ful of folke," Jonson's, Pope's, and Hogarth's Londons, Nathanael West's Los Angeles, etc. *The satirist* is the "I" of formal satire or a point-of-view character like Gulliver or a vehicle for invective like Thersites; in any case he is a "mask," distinct from the author, and his character is determined by the artistic demands of the genre. *The plot of satire*, unlike those of comedy and tragedy, does not progress; the satiric scene remains unchanged, always crowded with fools and villains, and the satirist remains indignant at it from beginning to end. In terms of these elements Kernan distinguishes formal satire, in which the satirist stands apart from the scene, from Menippean satire, in which the satirist merges with the scene or disappears altogether. Simple as it is, this is the most complete theory of satire yet presented, and it proves rather effective when applied to the literature of the Renaissance.

Thus Kernan describes the traditional English satirist as using the mask of the plowman, the simple, honest preacher indignant about social evils. Under the influence of the classics and for "complex causes . . . beyond the scope of this work," a new type of satire appeared in the late sixteenth century in which the satirist used the mask of a railing malcontent. Renaissance critical theory wrongly supposed "satire" to be derived from "satyr," and the rough quality of late Elizabethan formal verse satires, especially Marston's, is a result of the satirist's envisioning his malcontent spokesman as satyr-like.

It should be pointed out that Kernan's most important achievement in this description is clarity of exposition: he says almost nothing new. The plowman tradition of satire was worked out by Helen White, the satirical malcontent pose is common knowledge, and Kernan's discussion of Elizabethan critical theories of satire owes an unacknowledged debt to O. J. Campbell, *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida* (1938). Kernan's description is neater and clearer than that in the chapter on satire in Hallett Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry* (1952), but it comes to essentially the same thing. And Smith is briefer and does not omit the complex causes. Perhaps the one new thing in Kernan's account is the degree of emphasis placed on the connection between "satire" and "satyr"; but this is probably excessive, and it causes the author to pass over hurriedly important satirists like Donne and Lodge in whom the connection is not apparent.

Completing his discussion of verse satire, Kernan turns to the theatre and describes the absorption of formal satire into the drama and the dramatic use of the railing malcontent satirist. The plays discussed include *Histrionmastix*, *What You Will*, *Every Man Out*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist* (on which Kernan's criticism seemed to me most interesting), *Troilus*, *Timon*, *Antonio and Mellida*, *The Malcontent*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*. In general Kernan's theory is as effective here as with non-dramatic satire, although I wonder about the advisability of discussing plays like *Every Man Out* in which the malcontent satirist is the dominant point-of-view character on the same level with plays like *The Duchess of Malfi* in which the malcontent is simply one of the characters.

One problem which appears throughout the book is Kernan's opposition of his own approach to satire to the "biographical approach"—the term is used pejoratively. Kernan treats the railing malcontent of Elizabethan satire as a

satiric mask and not as the true personality of the author. But, with one exception, Elizabethan satirists have not been identified with their masks by biographical critics. The exception is John Marston, whose character Kernan displays a special interest in defending. Marston has been almost universally diagnosed as a neurotic. The most elaborate statement of this diagnosis, which for some reason Kernan does not mention, is José Axelrad, *Un Malcontent Elizabéthain: John Marston* (1955), in which the following conclusion is reached:

L'écoeuement et la révolte expriment certaines caractéristiques du tempérament de Marston. Il est en effet d'humeur belliqueuse, volontiers querelleur, et semble avoir pris plaisir à donner des coups, sinon à en recevoir. Le fait est qu'il les a provoqués, en protestant à tort et à travers contre tout: les hommes, la société, l'Eglise, la Cour. Plus peut-être qu'un malcontent du type traditionnel, c'est un récalcitrant qui crie et tempête et jure, pour le seul plaisir d'exploser. (p. 307)

In fairness we should note that this view of Marston's personality is based not on simple identification of man with mask, but on consideration of his whole literary output and of certain contemporary opinions of the man. In handling one of these latter, Kernan is led to describe a character in *The Second Return from Parnassus* as "a caricature of the literary personality of John Marston." I feel that Kernan does injustice to his theory of satire in making it seem a mere defense of the character of John Marston.

On the whole I should say that the principal values of *The Cankered Muse* are the theory of satire it offers and the clarity with which its author, who writes very well, is able to present the generally accepted picture of Elizabethan satire.

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The Correspondence of André Gide and Edmund Gosse, 1904-1928. Edited by Linette Fisher Brugmans. New York: New York University Press, 1959. Pp. ix + 220. \$4.50.

Few books are more interesting than sparkling correspondence between great literary figures. This exchange of letters, regrettably, falls far short of that level. Although Gide is certainly a modern giant, Gosse has been assessed by time for what he was—a sensitive but not really acute critic of the late nineteenth century school who, somewhat vainly, enjoyed his position of power. His mind, like his work, is rather undistinguished; and this picture soon emerges from Prof. Brugmans' pages. The prerequisite of great correspondence is for both writers to have first-class minds even if both are not artists of the first magnitude. Certainly Gide never revealed his heart and mind to Gosse as he did with his correspondence to Claudel, Charles du Bos, Valéry, and even Jammes and Rilke. My impression of this correspondence is that Gide was a giant who felt quite uncomfortable talking to a man obviously not on his level.

Gide turned to Gosse in 1904 in an attempt to curry favor with a powerful

critic who might make his fortune in England. Gide was worried, as he wrote Jammes, by the failure of *Saül* and *Le Roi Candaulé*, presentation copies of which he sent Gosse. The British critic, though a Francophile, was polite but reserved in his reply; and five years of silence ensued. The turning-point of their relationship was the appearance of *La Porte étroite*. The Calvinistic pietism of the book deeply moved Gosse; it resuscitated memories which had caused him to write *Father and Son*, a biography-autobiography, which he sent Gide. The correspondence later enters a second phase, during the World War, when their letters lose their artistic interest and focus upon the political situation. The third phase, the postwar period, is the most unsatisfactory of all, though they resume their literary talk. It is in this period that Gide increasingly hides himself except in occasional outbursts of honesty. He has his reasons. Gosse is superannuated and his opinions dated and boring. This situation embarrasses Gide, who came into his own after the war. Their relationship, in short, has been transposed: Gide first turned to Gosse because he was unsuccessful in his native France and needed foreign patronage; now Gosse lionized him in an attempt, probably unconscious, to stay "young" on the literary scene. As a result the two men are rarely frank with each other except when, for example, Gosse goads him into honesty, as he did with *Corydon* and *Si le Grain ne meurt*. They are often irritated with each other—Gosse because Gide has neglected to write and send his books, Gide because Gosse continues an awkward relationship. Gosse died in 1928, cutting a correspondence which had never been deep but which had become even more painful with the years.

Prof. Brugmans is a splendid editor. She translates Gide's letters most idiomatically and gives ample background notes. Her history of the correspondence is full, and her analysis of Gosse as a critic of Gide is just and sound. Her editorial work, in short, is admirable. But despite this fact the correspondence as a whole remains slight and rather uninteresting.

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