

## Book Reviews

*The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society.* By Northrop Frye.  
The Society for the Humanities, Cornell University. Cornell University  
Press: Ithaca, New York, 1970. Pp. xii, 316.

In this collection of sixteen essays written during 1962-68 the intellectual energy which pervades Northrop Frye's work is often fused with remarkable moral passion. Sometimes embattled to the point of Blakian truculence but always coherent, he defends the stubborn structures of humanistic society and imaginative literature (in his view metaphorically identified) against the anti-intellectual forces which would destroy them. Some of his targets are the neo-fascism of the extreme Left, the hucksters of 'relevance' and 'utility' in education, and the consumerist propaganda which threatens the autonomy of the arts. His apologetics arise from a commitment to the university, for him the only possible community of spiritual authority in the present and future. Constant revolution and metamorphosis in the 'real' world reduce it and the temporal authority which controls it to mere transient appearance: this Frygian footnote to Plato asserts that the real or permanent form of human society is revealed to us only through the study of the arts and sciences, the total body of human achievement from which all significant social change originates and of which universities are the concrete though imperfect manifestation.

In his subtitle and Preface, Frye refutes the accusation that he ignores the social reference of literary criticism, stating roundly that he has written of practically nothing else. His thematic arrangement of these essays into two parts is an attempt to lend substance to this claim: seven theoretical studies of the social contexts of literary criticism are followed by nine critical essays, grouped under the title "Applications", which deal with major literary problems in more or less chronological order. These rather mechanical gestures at unity are less important than other factors which create a sense of continuous thesis. One such factor, though perhaps superficial, is the sustained atmosphere of "live" performance. Most of these essays were originally delivered from the lectern; as an expert transmitter of a genteel oral tradition, Frye keeps his audiences amused with pointed vignettes and aroused by daring generalizations, although the exquisite logic of his arguments is sometimes thereby disrupted. The really striking quality of the book is, however, its organic unity that derives from the awesome comprehensiveness and order of Frye's mind. He has often been criticized for schematic rigidity and abstraction, but the overall impression of *The Stubborn Structure* is that the high degree of structure which the reader experiences is imposed by a mind which is, in Montaigne's phrase, *ondoyant et divers*. Like the great humanists whose work he and Lionel Trilling

are continuing, he simplifies, in the finest sense of that word, the expanding complex of subjects on which he writes.

Anyone who rejected the hypothesis in *Anatomy of Criticism* that evaluation is a by-product rather than the end of the critical process is unlikely to be convinced by Frye's recent polemics. He has hardened against non-synoptic critical methods, dismissing them variously as "elegant rumination", "the infantilism of specialists" and attempts "to exalt taste over knowledge". Belief in "a plurality of critical methods" or schools, including "a school of mythical or archetypal criticism", reflects "confusion in critical theory" and "confusion about me". He tries to correct both kinds of confusion in "The Road of Excess" by maintaining that the full imaginative and intellectual experience of Blake's Prophecies (as recorded in his *Fearful Symmetry*) leads one to, presumably, the palace of critical wisdom. However arrogant this may sound (especially out of context), Frye is not claiming superiority for his own critical method but asserting that criticism is not a method at all: the end of criticism as an activity which includes both teaching and scholarship "is not an aesthetic but an ethical and participating end: for it, ultimately, works of literature are not things to be contemplated but powers to be absorbed".

The context-application method is exemplified in the opening essays of each section, both of which deal with the central concept of the book—Utopia. Establishing the context for a detailed study of Utopian literature from Plato to Huxley, Frye states in "The Instruments of Mental Production" his major premise that education aims at a unified view of reality. A theory of education, he continues, implies a theory of society which in turn leads to the construction of a social model or Utopia. Conversely, reasoning from literature to society, one finds that all literary Utopias are essentially educational theories embodied as coherent social orders. Science studies the actual, or what is 'out there' in the environment; its primary virtue is detachment, which may degenerate to the vice of indifference and thence to anarchy. The arts study the ideal, or what is 'in here' in the mind; their primary virtue is concern, which may degenerate to the vice of anxiety and thence to repression. Science is its own world-view since its language is mathematical, but the arts, relying on verbal language, are structured by a mythopoetic world-view since myth is the conceivable or imaginative limit of human desire expressed verbally. Concern becomes anxiety and repression when a single myth, usually religious or political, tries to swallow up all others. Thus education in the arts and sciences must liberate the mind from the passive stock responses inculcated by that pervasive social mythology which creates the 'well-adjusted' citizen: liberation consists in the assimilation of the structures formed by the arts and sciences and results in the 'maladjusted' citizen. A society of such citizens would be continuous, stable and progressive because, aware of the disparity between the actual and the ideal and motivated by the moral attitudes of concern and detachment, it would strive always to overcome that disparity.

Frye's study of "Varieties of Literary Utopias" in the context just outlined demonstrates the interpenetration of social and literary criticism. He shifts his focus from the large movements of human history to vogues of the late sixties, from detailed commentary on specific books to a comprehensive morphology of literary symbolism. An analysis of present society finds complete literary expression in two mythical forms, either the social contract (projection of analysis into the past) or the Utopia (projection of analysis into the future). The social contract is a myth of the origins of society followed by a decline into the vices and follies of history and thus normally follows a tragic pattern; the Utopia, as a myth of *telos*, appears in literature in a comic shape. This essay abounds in trenchant observation. Tragedy, remarks Frye almost in an aside, is a form which proceeds towards an epiphany of law because a contract myth is by definition a legal one. Book Four of *Gulliver's Travels* is a pastoral satire reflecting Swift's conservative mistrust of the pastoral conception of a natural society: the noble savage is caricatured as Yahoo and the natural society can be attained only by creatures who are not human. As Frye amplifies his theme he brings Utopian literature towards the centre of our literary experience by stressing that once and future states are at the centre of our psychological and social experience. His exposition incorporates much that he has written on before: the quest-myth, the archetypes of garden and city, the metaphorical equation of human and non-human, the fall from the paradise of innocence into the desert of experience, entry into the City of God in both outer and inner space, the concepts of the liberal education and the educated imagination. As a climax he offers a prophetic vision of the liberated mind-body, 'out there' unified with 'in here', which draws on the Utopian and apocalyptic perspectives of Milton, Blake, Marx, Freud, Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse. When Frye is at his best, when the austere intensity of his prose complements the clarity and power of his insight, he becomes himself the ideal critic he has called for, the creative scholar who does not merely reflect but expands our understanding of literature.

Of course he is not always at his best. No critic is easier to parody than Frye, as some of his disciples have discovered unintentionally. His transcendental tendencies can lead him close to the kind of solipsism John Kemble was mocking when he remarked, 'The world is one great thought and I am thinking it'. Witness, for example, his attempt to define Romanticism in "The Drunken Boat". Even Frye cannot walk upon that quicksand without periodically getting stuck. Yet when one considers him wrong, one never feels that he is insidiously so. His definition of Romanticism as a change in spatial imagery around the beginning of the nineteenth century which in turn caused changes in beliefs and values may provoke disagreement, but it cannot create confusion for as an hypothesis it is perfectly clear. The same may be said of his exercise in corrective criticism, "Dickens and the Comedy of Humours". Using ruthless parody, Frye attacks the

commentators who 'bowdlerize' Dickens to render him acceptable to contemporary taste. After disposing of the theories that the novelist is a dark ambiguous ironist or a documentary realist, Frye employs his hypotheses about Classical comedy (which he articulated earlier in *A Natural Perspective*) to argue that these conventions are central to the structure of a Dickens novel. Consequently the sentiment, the melodrama, the slapstick, the fairy-tale endings, the whole fantastic Dickensian amalgam that, as a whole, tends to embarrass critics of the novel, comes together as a coherent comic pattern. Even though Frye's construct seems neater than the novels themselves, his sense of textual fact emerges so powerfully that the urge to quibble recedes.

In the two essays on Blake as well as elsewhere in the book the reader may discover some hitherto unsuspected common ground between Frye and that other rogue professor of English, Marshall McLuhan. Like Blake, each one has created his own system in preference to becoming enslaved by another man's, though both owe much to the poet. They agree that Blake was the first identifier of the Frankenstein psychosis afflicting post-Gutenberg society—man as the servomechanism of his own technologies, man who, in Blake's phrase, becomes what he beholds. Both Frye and McLuhan are concerned with imaginative literature as percept rather than as concept, and their views of education are similar: Frye wants students to become "maladjusted" to society and McLuhan wants institutions of learning to become "anti-environments". As both men have always freely admitted, they developed their ideas in a stimulating intellectual milieu together with many other gifted academics at the University of Toronto during a period when that institution was building a proud tradition of humanistic scholarship that we may perhaps call distinctly Canadian—it has certainly spread since to other parts of Canada. Central to this tradition has been a profound faith in the university itself, a faith which has never visibly wavered in either Frye or McLuhan and which is powerfully affirmed in *The Stubborn Structure*. Professor Edward A. Watson's attack on wishy-washy liberalism, which appeared recently in these pages,<sup>1</sup> was an expression of the same faith in the same tradition. Those who pander to barbarism by confusing crude temper tantrums with what Frye calls the moral attitude of concern are the victims of their own stock responses.

The final essay is Frye's conclusion to *Literary History of Canada* (1965). It is one of his pieces that is admirable without being exciting, and it should have been exciting. There is about it a sense of state occasion, as the Canadian Critic Laureate dutifully surveys literary achievement across his Dominion. He pays proper deference to the bicultural and regional imperatives by distributing his specific references to writers evenly *a mari usque ad mare*, but one cannot help wondering what he *really* thinks about some of our contemporary literature. Perhaps he was hampered by the same cultural anxieties that, in the analysis he offers here, hampered Canadian writers during the past decade. There is a remarkable differ-

ence between this essay and his lively though less ambitious survey of Canadian poetry written for Malcolm Ross's superlative pioneering collection, *The Arts in Canada* (1958). Frye notes in the newer essay that scholarship in Canada has usually been written with more conviction and authority than the literature itself. Perhaps, then, it is Canada's leading scholar who should, like Emerson and Ruskin, abandon decorum to forge the uncreated imagination of our future artists.

1. *The University and the Destructive Element in the Liberal Spirit* (Dalhousie Review, Vol. 50, No. 1 pp. 363-372).

Acadia University

ROGER C. LEWIS

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*On Canada: Essays in Honour of Frank H. Underhill.* Edited by Norman Penlington. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971. Pp. xvii, 196. \$11.50.

If *Festschriften* are difficult to edit, they are devilish to review. This one in honour of Frank Underhill is the third to appear in three years, and all three have been in honour of Canadian historians, F. H. Soward and D. G. Creighton, besides this one. All of them offer a great range of themes, perhaps the most eclectic being, appropriately enough, the present book. Public policy and poetry, history and foreign relations, French and English Canada, are all subsumed in this tribute to one of our greatest, and most affectionately remembered, historians.

Frank Underhill is a wry, sprightly man with a voice that has a nice pitch of aspirate gravel in it, and whose eyes sparkle with irony as he talks. He was never much of a man for political gossip; he had no liking for that kind of delicious small-change of politics. Most people relish it, with a touch of malice in the bargain: gossip bored Underhill. What made his brain tick, and always would, were a man's ideas. What did men actually think about the things they did? Did they think at all? "The unreflective life is not worth living": Underhill, a classics scholar to start with, would have agreed with that. He indeed carried it over to the historian's duty to reflect about how others in the past had lived their lives, in politics, parliament, or anywhere else. And he set it all down in a firm, clear, ironic style that reflected a mind sharp as a scalpel. He is as much a delight to read as to listen to. He wrote abundantly and well: his collected bibliography at the end of the book comes to 62 pages of print.

This *Festschrift* is a curious assortment, more so than is usual with what is, after all, a grab-bag from very diverse sources. The book is handsomely set out in the University of Toronto Press's best style. There is a perceptive essay by W. G. Ormsby on Lord Durham, arguing forcefully that Durham's policy of assimilating the French Canadians within English Canadian society had been well determined upon before ever he came. It can also be added that that policy was also the conviction of the Whig ministry of Lord Melbourne. One of the most useful essays

is Fred Cogswell's paper on the poetry of modern Quebec, about the only essay this writer has seen in English on a subject English-Canadians know far too little about. There is a graceful and sensitive paper by Naim Kattan, "Le Canada et la France", one that rises to real eloquence and feeling. Escott Reid has some memories of Louis St. Laurent that are a happy antidote to our memories of the St. Laurent of the Pipeline Debate in 1956. The prize of the book is Margaret Prang's essay, "F. H. U. of the *Canadian Forum*", perhaps because it has so much of Underhill himself, and one is sentimental enough to want to read in a *Festschrift* something of the man who occasioned it. (Norman Penlington's introduction is, unfortunately, rather too brief.) What Margaret Prang catches is Underhill himself, the reviewer, the satirist, the ironic commentator of Canadian (and American) life. Underhill's review of R. H. Tawney's *Equality* and two other books, in the *Canadian Forum* for July, 1931, has the authentic stamp of Underhill's mind:

What emerges most vividly from these books is the sense of the intolerable vulgarity of a civilization in which the profit motive is the main-spring of action and which is dominated by men whose sole claim to distinction is the keenness of their nose for money. . . . The depressing thing about Canada is not so much that the Holts and Gundys and Beauharnois gangs should succeed in collaring most of its natural resources as that most of our young men should be growing up with dreams of emulating these worthies or of becoming yes-men under them.

What we now need are Underhill's collected essays. He still talks to us.

*Dalhousie University*

P. B. WAITE

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*Shaw: Seven Critical Essays.* Edited by Norman Rosenblood. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971. Pp. 134.

*Shaw: Seven Critical Essays* is a volume of papers read at seminars held in connection with the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, in 1966, 1967, and 1968. Six of them are about Shaw; the other is about Maugham's *The Circle*.

In his introduction, Norman Rosenblood comments on the difficulties in editing such a volume; he refrains from mentioning those that have confronted the authors. Papers delivered at theatre festival "seminars" (I speak from experience) are prepared for an audience that is certain to be united in interest in the theatre but decidedly diversified in knowledge, experience, and sophistication. The temptation for the author to content himself with addressing a hypothetical lowest common denominator, especially since the occasion itself is more or less festive, is strong.

Most of the essayists of the present volume resisted it. Alan S. Downer analyses Shaw's first play (*Widowers' Houses*) and the reasons for its failure, and argues that "*Getting Married* was the first completely Shavian play" and announced the arrival of the true Shavian drama that was to go from strength to strength and

reach "its final highly individual expression in *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, one of the triumphs of the modern dramatic repertory". Clifford Leech is at first seduced into irrelevancies by the euphoria of the occasion, but then turns to making some illuminating comments on certain of the dramatic techniques of Shaw and of Shakespeare. For him, with no special reference to Downer's opinion, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* is an "unhappy play", a work of "defiant frivolity".

Professor Leech emphasizes that Shaw was mirroring his time, in his plays, and he brands as mistaken the notion that "Shakespeare is a dramatist of action and Shaw a dramatist of argument". All the same, when after examining *Love's Labour Lost* and a couple of scenes from *Troilus and Cressida*, he comes to sum up, he does so by saying, "Shaw believed in argument, Shakespeare did not. Shaw felt he could influence the development of things in his time, Shakespeare knew that he could only show men acting and speaking as they are and that all history is already written". The paradox in the essay is not satisfactorily accounted for. Certainly if Shaw's plays are in essence mere public debates in disguise, however humorous, then at least they are not what their author intended them to be:

Would anyone but a baffleheaded idiot of a university professor, half crazy with correcting examination papers, infer that all my plays were written as economic essays, and not as plays of life, character, and human destiny like those of Shakespeare or Euripides?

So Shaw wrote in 1919.

The most substantial of the seven essays is Martin Meisel's "Shaw and Revolution: The Politics of the Plays". Against the background of a careful study of Shaw's political experience and writing, Professor Meisel examines the political thought and intent of the plays, with special attention to a subject on which Shaw was persistently ambiguous: revolution by violence. At times the account reminds one of Herbert Marcuse's more recent reflections on freedom and revolution. Meisel recognizes, however, that Shaw, through his early and exhausting efforts in Fabian politics, had learned the bitter truth that man is not good enough for the socialist kingdom of heaven on earth, that optimism is possible only if one's perspective is longer than human history:

So it is that Shaw's plays, however antipathetic to illusion, however reductive their tactics, however much they depend as comedy and drama on the play of intellect, nevertheless are aimed at altering the condition of the will.

That sentence calls for expansion into a book, and I hope Professor Meisel is writing it. It should be the best book on Shaw to date.

The play that receives most substantial and repeated comment by the essayists is, interestingly, *Widowers' Houses*—not a very characteristic Shavian piece and a failure in its own time, except in the judgment of so discerning a reader as Oscar Wilde, who wrote to Shaw that he admired the "horrible flesh and blood of your

creatures". *Widowers' Houses* has since come into its own, of course. A year ago, London audiences at the Royal Court theatre found it so stirring indeed, that—at least on the evening when I was there—they responded in vocal scorn to Sartorius's defense of slum landlordism, in Act 2. In a city beset with bitter housing problems, Shaw would unquestionably have been pleased by that response. Perhaps, too, he would have gone away and revised ruefully the time scheme of *Back to Methuselah*.

University of Guelph

J. PERCY SMITH

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*Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry: An Historical Study in Criticism and Interpretation.* By Irving I. Edgar, M.D. New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library Inc., 1970. Pp. XIX, 382. \$9.95.

When a member of the Writer's Guild of America (Western Division) wants information on a specialized subject for a television or film story he turns to his latest W. G. A. bulletin, to a list covering everything he may wish to know from *architecture* to *zodiac*, with Los Angeles telephone numbers attached, dials, and gets his information.

What did Shakespeare—whose plays ranged over so many fields of human endeavour—what did he do? This is the question Dr. Edgar asks with regard to medicine and psychiatry in Part I of his book. As physician, medical historian and Shakespearean scholar, he is well qualified not only to ask, but to answer as well. He takes issue with the many bardolators who, with more ardour than reason, attribute to Shakespeare a perception of and knowledge in medicine beyond that of the most advanced physicians of his time. His scientific bent shows at its best in refuting the arguments of those who credit Shakespeare with describing the circulation of the blood twenty or more years before William Harvey announced his great discovery. He points out that Shakespeare spoke only of the ebb and flow of blood, not circulation; and of blood in the veins, and not in the arteries which at that time were believed to contain some unknown, vital spirit. He documents, again and again, with all the zeal of the research man, the "ebb and flow" concept in the writings of philosophers for centuries back, and in the work of Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists.

In general medical knowledge, Dr. Edgar shows that Shakespeare, in common with most Elizabethans, had a wider knowledge of current medicine than the citizen of today. The quality of medicine was bad enough that the man who could administer to his own ills was often better off than if he trusted to professional hands. As with blood flow, his knowledge did not exceed that of his contemporaries.

Coming to psychiatry, Dr. Edgar finds that Shakespeare did use many of the better writings of the times, in particular Timothy Bright's *Treatise Of Melancholy*.



He again points out that Chaucer, Ben Jonson and others delved as knowledgeably if not as deeply into their characters' idiosyncrasies.

In Part II, Dr. Edgar changes direction and pace. He moves from research scientist to Shakespearean scholar, and studies in depth the characters of King Lear (whose play, he says, many critics consider Shakespeare's greatest), and of Hamlet (whose tragedy he and most acclaim as the greatest dramatic tragedy ever written). His studies are profound, and in detail. If he sometimes reads too much psychology into a line or phrase of the play, his errors are no more grievous than those he attributes to earlier critics in Part I. He concurs with most critics that Hamlet had an Oedipus complex. To state that the tragedy is the greatest ever written on this subject is true, but to imply by this that it is competitive with the stark, pure original seems unfair.

In stating his conviction that the character of Hamlet is an expression of Shakespeare's own personality, Dr. Edgar again allies himself with many scholars who, standing on high academic peaks, do not see Shakespeare in a practical light. He was a man of the theatre. He was not a poet who wrote in the dramatic form, but a dramatist who used the poetic medium. Even in his sonnets this is evident. In Lear, in Hamlet, in all his characters, with art and with stagecraft, he strove to produce not reality, but the illusion of reality, which is what theatre is about. He was a genius living amid all the excitement of the Renaissance. He observed and understood his fellow men to a degree unattained by any other dramatist or poet who has lived.

Halifax

A. L. MURPHY, M.D.

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*Voyages to New France, 1615-1618.* By Samuel de Champlain; translated by Michael Macklem; foreword by Marcel Trudel. Oberon Press, 1970. Pp. 127, 6 plates.

This little book is Champlain's record of his travels in Canada in the years following the establishment of the station of Quebec, a period recorded in his longer book *Voyages*. In this period he devoted himself to reestablishing the French alliance with the Hurons on whom the fur trade and therefore the survival of Quebec depended. This included the introduction of missionary priests into Huronia and an attack upon an Iroquois village. However, beyond the Hurons were other tribes capable of interrupting the free flow of furs along the Great Lakes, and Champlain continued on to make friends with the Ottawas, the Algonkins and the Nipissings, as well as the minor Iroquoian neighbours of the Hurons.

It is customary today to attribute to Champlain full credit for anything in which he took part, even the establishment of Acadia where he played a minor role. In this period, however, he was in command, the only position which drew out the best of his talents. As explorer, mapmaker, observer and recorder of the country,

the Indians and their customs, and as an understanding diplomat in that dangerous world, he was unequalled. Here one sees only his bravery, ability and success. The years to come would bring on the fury of the Iroquois whom he had underrated, and the capture of Quebec by Kirke, grim interruptions of a great dream.

Champlain's drawings of the Indians are genuine in detail, though the faces rarely suggest Indians, and the attack upon the Iroquois palisade shows his usual Picasso-like perspective. The translation is clear, if occasionally colloquial. As one unfamiliar to Ontario woodlands, I should have liked a note to suggest whether the red-headed hen seen by Champlain (p. 59) was a turkey, and the lemon-like fruit (p. 41) was a May-apple, but in general the picture of the forest and its people, friendly, happy and brutal, is vivid and accurate.

*Wolfville, N. S.*

J. S. ERSKINE

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*International Trade and Domestic Prosperity: Canada 1926-38*, Canadian Studies in Economics No. 22. By R. W. Thompson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970. Pp. 139. \$5.00.

Assessing external influences in our economy is recurrently a topical endeavour for Canadian economists. And for obvious reasons much of this attention has been directed toward the Canadian experience during the late 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, the present study is the fifth in its series to be devoted in whole or part to examining these influences in this period. Thompson applies econometric (statistical) methods to data on exports, imports, domestic investment, prices, and Canadian and foreign incomes in order to explore three propositions: (1) that Canada's exports of goods and services depend directly on incomes in the countries in which these exports are marketed, (2) that exports of other countries to Canada depend directly on incomes here, and (3) that incomes in Canada—and hence, the extent of prosperity or depression—depend primarily on export performance and secondarily on investment behaviour (which in turn may also depend on export performance). Ancillary arguments are developed: (4) that the above propositions are particularly important in a resource-based dependent economy, (5) that Canada was and is such an economy, and (6) that the extent of depression can more accurately be judged by comparing the shortfall of realized income relative to achievable income than by the percentage of unemployment.

None of these propositions is new or implausible. Except for the last one, all have been examined in detail for the depression years by other authors. The deductive arguments for the first five propositions derive from theory developed about 1930 and applied to Canada at least a score of years ago. Although data on Canadian incomes in its present form has been available only since 1958, the rest of the data is less recent. In spite of overwhelming advances in econometric

techniques in the last two decades—some of which are clearly appropriate to analyses of this type—the methods used by Thompson are not essentially different from those employed a quarter of a century ago by others examining the same phenomena. Hence, it is not surprising that his empirical results largely parallel those of earlier authors. Finally, the inferences derived from the results are long since part of the conventional wisdom in this area. What then is the contribution of this monograph?

In nine appendices which account for over a third of his book, Thompson describes his procedures and sets forth most of the underlying data which he modifies and adjusts in a number of respects before using it analytically. While one might question a number of his adjustments (e.g. for population change and for trend) and question his failure to make other adjustments (e.g. for variations in the exchange rate), he has gone to considerable effort to draw together consistent sets of aggregated and disaggregated data on export and import volumes and prices. These data will be useful for others who may subsequently undertake research on this period. Furthermore, unlike most earlier studies, his import and export statistics include traded services; and he provides disaggregated estimates of the import propensities for services for Canada. Finally although textual references to earlier work in this area are minimal, there is a comprehensive bibliography.

Dalhousie University

PAUL B. HUBER

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*The Medium is the Rear View Mirror: Understanding McLuhan.* By Donald F. Theall. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971. Pp. 261. \$8.75. \$2.95 (paper).

There are certain critics who bring to their subject minds larger and more sophisticated than those revealed in the works under discussion. Van Wyck Brooks on Fenimore Cooper, Edmund Wilson on Bolshevik historians, add to these Professor Theall on Marshall McLuhan. With considerable elegance of mind he conducts the reader through the McLuhan canon, pausing to discourse upon a crudity here, an error there, a felicitous apophthegm elsewhere. His book is distinguished by the leisureliness—as well as by the absence of an easily apprehended central focus—of good talk. It could have been shortened considerably and not lost any of its usefulness as a guidebook. In fact, using this as a mere guidebook would resemble phoning the Weather Bureau to find out if it's raining outside. *The Medium is the Rear View Mirror* is far more: a chatty, informed meditation on the principal issues its subject raises, namely, the question of whether a medium is an expression or a determinant of the way we view things, and the relevance of the literary traditions McLuhan works out of to an analysis of the present culture.

The principal difficulty for the reader is his growing realization that he

would rather leave off discussing the *lacunae* in McLuhan (for anyone troubling to read this will surely have done a lot of that on his own beforehand) and watch Professor Theall pick up some of the matters—let us subsume them under the Meaning of Meaning Question—he tantalizingly toys with. The fact is that it remains possible for an author to be too clever for the book he is writing—Harold Macmillan's memoirs are an example—inducing in the reader a desire for either more, or less, but in any case not what he has before him. Doubtless this book will remain indispensable for anyone caring deeply enough about its subject to read it. It remains, however, a very suggestive monograph straining against its own limits rather than the larger work it offers so many hints of becoming. For example, within the space of four pages in an Appendix Professor Theall, writing on "The Influence of the Canadian University Milieu on McLuhan", makes the beginnings of what could become a pioneering work on the sociology of Canadian knowledge, an undiscovered country except for a chapter in *The Vertical Mosaic*. One can but hope that this will be expanded into something wider in scope, as ought to happen with many other brief discussions in the text.

Professor Theall is at his strongest in discussing the Renaissance Humanist tradition that ultimately came to produce the wordsmith Joyce of *Finnegan's Wake*, the Joyce McLuhan uses, in Theall's words, "as the all-encompassing contemporary writer". For the author, the power of this tradition lies in its ability to maintain a tone of balance in its views. In the manner of a Popean couplet, frivolity is tempered with seriousness, abstraction with concrete naming, analysis with detailed description. It is the author's conclusion that this balance has been lost in McLuhan, the irony becoming frivolous, the tentative dogmatic, and inclusivity a reduction of all disparities into a pudding-like sameness. Professor Theall is himself well-versed in this Humanist tradition, rendering his book's approach frustrating to anyone seeking some definitive remarks on McLuhan. His very exposition of his subject's intellectual sleight-of-hand is offset by his appreciation of the stimulation to be gained from reading him. Greatly as the reader may marvel at this juggling, firmly as he may resist the temptation to dismiss it as waffling, the question emerging from the book, that requires at least an attempt at an answer, is whether or not reading McLuhan is really worth the time. Are the insights gained purchased at so painful a cost of working through error and distortion as to make them too dear for the common reader? Truths abound in Carlyle's *French Revolution*; if you were asked to recommend a study of that upheaval, would you pick Carlyle? Or wouldn't you recommend that the inquirer save that interesting curiosity until he had acquainted himself with truer studies in the field?

My analogy flounders on the fact that the entire area of media studies is relatively new and decidedly conjectural, an enterprise for buccaneers rather than missionaries. It is the recentness of our widespread awareness of the effects of communications media on our way of seeing the world, and our uneasiness in the

face of this discovery, that grants acceptance to the satisfying and simplistic doctrines of McLuhan.\* The truth of our situation remains at large. One hopes that Professor Theall will use this book as the beginning of the chase.

\* For a lively discussion of this, see Francis Sparshott, "The Gutenberg Nebula", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, III (July, 1969), 135-155.

Trinity College, Toronto

DENNIS DUFFY

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*Plato: Dramatist of the Life of Reason.* By John Herman Randall, Jr. Montreal: McGill University Press (New York and London: Columbia University Press), 1970. Pp. xii, 274. \$8.50.

In his opening chapters Professor Randall briefs us at some length in preparation for the personally conducted tour of Plato's dialogues on which he is about to take us. He explains how little is really known about Plato or about the authorship of the writings attributed to him. He describes Plato's intellectual inheritance, background and more immediate surroundings. He tells us that reason for the Greeks meant not the scientific intelligence that aims at controlling nature and man but the vision and insight of the artist, poet and dramatist. Greek philosophy, at its best, is an artistic achievement, "a rendering of the world and of human life in terms of the artist's imaginative insight". The living actuality of this reason in action is what Plato has dramatized in the dialogues.

Once under way the tour turns out to be a leisurely, companionable, expansive and almost light-hearted ramble. Generally, it is intended to support Professor Randall's interpretation of Plato as the artist-philosopher. But the pace is easy and there is time for enlivening digressions. We pause to attend to pungent comment on the credulities and fatuities of other would-be guides and on the incurable perverseness of the human race with particularly pointed reference to the contemporary North American scene. Incidentally we pick up many curiosities of scholarship. We learn of the Thracian worship of Sabozios, the beer-god; we are told that there are three kinds of logic: deductive, inductive and seductive; we are reminded that Hegel thought Socrates to be the "patron-saint of moral twaddle".

Perhaps Professor Randall is most successful with the *Symposium*. Here Socrates, through the tale of Diotima, makes us see how the earthly passions of the body may be transformed into a vision of the soul and an aspiration after the divine perfection. But then the abrupt and noisy entrance of the drunken Alcibiades appropriately brings us back to earth. We see that love is both tragic and comic. "It is to be seen truly only when you can behold both in the dramatic and irrational juxtaposition of life itself." This illustrates Plato's art of creating a vision of life's possibilities through the dramatic clash of opinions and "the confrontation of talk with fact". The method is dramatic but so also is the truth it enables us to perceive. We are not argued into anything. But we are led to see life's possibilities,

to see it as it is and as it might be for us, to experience the "eros" of aspiration, emotional involvement and commitment. The knowledge it conveys is existential knowledge.

The enthusiasm is infectious. Only after the tour is over does it occur to us to wonder whether that very Platonic richness of ambiguity, irony, artistic vision and personal commitment has not crept into Professor Randall's own narrative and obscured some palpable paradoxes. "The real Plato is the dialogues." But not all the dialogues, surely. It is the earlier, dramatic ones that are significant here. For Professor Randall, the late ones, if they are Plato's at all, are the work of the "school-master-Plato", "the Scholarch of the Academy", prosy, literalistic, concerned not with imaginative vision but with logical distinctions and theories of knowledge, reassuring to those without imagination but full of logic-chopping and futile academic exercises. "Scholars love to think of Plato as a professor". But here he comes into heavy collision with Gilbert Ryle who reverses this verdict in his *Plato's Progress*. Again, Professor Randall thinks that Plato the artist-philosopher had no philosophy of his own. Plato was not a Platonist. Gilbert Ryle attributes a part at least of Plato's progress to his getting beyond the theory of the forms which he finds to be absent from the early and refuted in the late dialogues. Yet Professor Randall maintains the unity of Plato's thought, the late-early contrast being one of method and scheme of exposition only. Clearly Professor Randall is far too experienced a hand to neglect the elusive art of subtle qualification which anticipates, disarms, or escapes criticism. But the result, if it is to avoid paradox, seems rather tenuous. To say this is not at all to belittle the amount of information the book contains about the philosophy of the Greeks and its subsequent interpretation. Crotchety it may be, but it surveys a wide territory. Perhaps what will give greatest enjoyment to many of his readers are the lively asides and astringent comments which express the personality of the author.

*University of King's College*

F. HILTON PAGE

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*Nietzsche in England 1890-1914*. By David S. Thatcher. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970. Pp. 331.

More than half a century has elapsed since the last of Nietzsche's works was translated into English. During that time his reputation has undergone more sharply defined vicissitudes, perhaps, than that of any other philosopher of his time. In the commentary that followed the rise of fascism and nazism, his detractors were able to exploit to the fullest the extremism in his declamatory denunciations of weakness, humility, and self-effacement, as well as that which informed his espousals of militant egoism, of the will to power, and of the "Übermensch". In more recent years, due mainly to the energy and critical acumen of Walter Kaufmann, the pendulum has swung the other way, and it is the gentle Nietzsche, the compas-

sionate humanitarian and the philosopher of culture, who has displaced the image of the notorious madman in the eyes of many.

In view of current cultural and social movements, it is not surprising that Nietzsche has gained a sympathetic following, even in the austere climate of British thought. Now that Christianity and intellectualism have been generally discredited and the forces of individualism, love, and brotherhood have been liberated by a spirit of total irreverence for everything that predates the generation gap, Nietzsche's pronouncements assume a prophetic ring. He is found to be "relevant," as the saying goes, not only by those who merely skim the sour cream off the top of his philosophy in order to reinforce personal prejudices but also by those who make an honest attempt to squeeze out of his aphorisms the rich yield of insights they contain. Like most serious and significant freethinkers of today, as well as those who are much less serious and significant, Nietzsche preferred to be thought of as a psychologist rather than a philosopher, and he insisted that any true philosophy must be firmly grounded in the concrete rather than the abstract, in the psychological reality of human behaviour rather than in doctrinal or political authority. He liked to refer to his work in general as a "metaphysics of art" based on the premise that life, in its totality, must be seen as an aesthetic phenomenon and not as a tragic demise before humanity could achieve its fullest potential. His "metaphysics" centered on a rejustification of the passions and emotions which he felt had been suppressed by Christian influence to the detriment of society at large. An integral part of contemporary culture is a ferment in the arts, particularly in conceptual art, one in which virtually anything that occupies space may be contemplated for its aesthetic value, the assumption being, as Nietzsche maintained, that reality is somehow transfigured when seen in an aesthetic perspective. Simultaneous with this development are a number of fads symptomatic of a concerted re-emphasis on emotional experience. The psychedelic boom, the drug cults, the prevalence of psychosomatic diseases, the conscious seeking out of the exotic and esoteric, all point to a kind of emotional drought in which any activity is quickly seized upon if it promises to recharge the affective batteries. Nietzsche's pervasive spirit of positivism has obvious bearings on the theories being advanced today by many *avant-garde* sociologists and educationists. Dr. Thatcher's study, then, comes at a time when the issues raised by the genius of the German philosopher are not just a matter of scholarly disputation but have become the coinage of contemporary culture.

Any study that confines itself to tracing influences or establishing intellectual debts is immediately vulnerable to the charge of irrelevancy. In the case of one that sifts through the available evidence as thoroughly as this does, charges of academic ostentation are just as likely to arise. No one is more aware of this than the author himself, and he is quick to point out that his book is of interest mainly to the social historian, that its value lies chiefly in establishing a sounder basis for

historical judgement rather than in enlarging upon an understanding of the nature of Nietzschean thought. The book is neither irrelevant nor ostentatious, however. It is, as Thatcher claims, "descriptive rather than critical, synthetic rather than analytic". It makes no attempt to establish incontrovertible proof but concentrates rather on illuminating the ways in which Nietzsche's ideas were appropriated by those who came into close contact with them, on finding out what was accepted or rejected, and on determining the extent to which they were compatible with intellectual trends extant during the period immediately following the *fin de siècle* decadence. It is just as important, if not more so, for the light it sheds on the dynamics of social change that were operative at the time as for the patience and integrity with which it outlines the Nietzschean influence.

Nietzsche's connections with the five major writers discussed in detail, John Davidson, Havelock Ellis, William Butler Yeats, Bernard Shaw, and A. R. Orage, are dealt with broadly in terms of his philosophy as a whole and with specific reference to his doctrine of the *Übermensch* which lent itself naturally to certain intellectual fashions coincident with its advent, namely widespread disenchantment with Christian belief, disappointment occasioned by what many thought to be the failure of liberal democracy to live up to its expectations, and desires expressed by some socialist and neo-aristocratic writers for a powerful liberating force that would break bonds imposed by social and cultural uniformity. Thatcher contends that although his influence was largely indirect, Nietzsche's particular brand of idealism, because of its consistent opposition to abstraction and theory, was felt so strongly by those who read him sympathetically that it could readily be used to justify movements that he explicitly denounced, movements such as socialism, mysticism, and feminism, as well as those that he endorsed—eugenics and the revitalization of society through art, for example. In academic circles the dissemination of Nietzschean ideas met with sustained resistance. "His aphorisms, his apparent lack of system, his method of expression, and his tone [ubiquitously ironic] constituted a stumbling block to academic philosophers at the universities, but to poets and artists who took their Nietzsche extramurally, they were a guarantee of intellectual and imaginative integrity." Although his influence was limited at first to a very small group of artists, Nietzsche gradually infiltrated the ranks of those whose aims were more broadly social and, as he did so, interpretations of his work gained in depth and sophistication. Thatcher avoids value judgements, for the most part, but comes down on the side of the gentle Nietzscheans. He concludes that Nietzsche "stood for civilization as opposed to aestheticism," that as a self-styled "philosopher of culture" he appealed mainly to those English writers whose political interests were subordinate to their desire for a transvaluation of cultural values that would infuse new blood into what they diagnosed as an anaemic society, a transvaluation that would resurrect style, individualism, and heroic vitality to their rightful positions of pre-eminence, thereby counter-effecting the levelling forces of politi-



cal uniformity and popular culture, both of which tended to reduce standards of taste to a lowest common denominator.

The book begins with John Davidson, one of the most outspoken critics of Christian belief and the chief advocate, in England at least, of individualism and egoism. What Davidson derived from Nietzsche was "a greater intensity, complexity, and ruthlessness" with which to substantiate his hostility to Christianity, his Darwinistic materialism, and his emphasis on the will to power, all essential elements of his work even before he encountered Nietzsche. Havelock Ellis was attracted by Nietzsche's individualism and by what he referred to as one of "the greatest spiritual forces which has appeared since Goethe." An active socialist, antipathetic towards both the extremism of Davidson and the authoritarianism of Shaw, Ellis's brand of socialism tended to align itself with a moral and cultural rather than a political axis. He hoped that the joint effort of socialism would allow for the freest expression of each person's moral nature. To this purpose he was able to pass lightly over the more outrageous of Nietzsche's statements to the moral subtleties implicit in the concept of the *Übermensch*, incorporating Nietzsche's ideas on cultural regeneration into an ethical framework that he expressed in his own metaphorical version of the "dance of life". The image of the dance was, of course, also central to William Butler Yeats's theory of "unity of being", a theory that has definite affinities with Nietzsche's "metaphysics of art," and it is probable that Yeats also saw the German philosopher as something of a spiritual force, though no one has as yet been able to determine precisely what either Yeats or Nietzsche understood by the term, "spiritual". In any case, Thatcher sees the two men as chief poet and philosopher respectively of a world-view based on self-conquest, on the idea that joy is deeper than sorrow, and on the belief that man attains something approximating spiritual exaltation not through Transcendence or divine benevolence but through the promulgation of those noble and heroic qualities that are peculiarly human. The chapter on Yeats approaches more closely than any other to critical analysis, not so much of Nietzsche's ideas as of Yeats's preoccupation with questions of morality and volition and of his concern with the relationship between art and life. Although Shaw had much more to say about Nietzsche, Thatcher feels that the philosopher's ideas were more closely integrated in the poetry and drama of Yeats, due to the fact that he and Nietzsche both thought along the same lines. Shaw did not think along the same lines despite his superman, his eugenic interests, and his social idealism. He is credited with the distinction of almost singlehandedly popularizing Nietzsche in England, but Thatcher points to Ibsen, Wagner, and Bergson as the real precursors of Shaw's ideas. Shaw was attracted by Nietzsche's iconoclasm, wit, and prophetic idealism but had little understanding of the theory of tragedy that formed the foundations of all his subsequent writing, and he himself created a superman that had little in common with the Nietzschean version. A. R. Orage, the theosophist, National Guild socialist, and editor of "the New Age",

turns out to be the gentlest of the Nietzscheans dealt with. He apparently saw Nietzsche as a mystic whose aristocratic ideals presaged a "new age" to come, one in which the best rather than the worst would be full of passionate intensity and the rise of the *Übermensch* would signal a kind of spiritual reformation. As Thatcher suggests, the mobilization of European supermen for the most violent conflict in history served as the definitive comment on Orage's hopes.

This book is heavy going. Anyone wishing to further his knowledge of the period, however, could hardly do better than to follow the instrumentation of those Nietzschean ideas that have turned out to be so germane to the social and intellectual history of the twentieth century. Dr. Thatcher succeeds in effecting a large synthesis out of many small bits and pieces of information and many oblique allusions. He never substitutes broad generalizations for accurate research. Neither does he avoid the labor of following up the facts to their logical conclusions. There are times when one feels that the author could have been more selective in the parade of evidence he brings forward, but there is not a lazy sentence in the book and the evidence is always brought to bear sharply on the cultural and intellectual temper of the times.

Dalhousie University

L. TUMMON

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*Virginia Woolf's 'Lighthouse'. A Study in Critical Method.* By Mitchell A. Leaska.

New York: Columbia University Press, 1970. Pp. 221. \$8.25.

Studies in the novel have tended to orient themselves around either the complete works of one author or a group of novels that play a significant part in the development of the genre. As a result, individual novels have been exposed too rarely to the kind of searching analysis that is essential if they are ever to yield their full meaning. In one of its aspects, Mitchell A. Leaska's study of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* joins the small body of work, including Gilbert's *Ulysses*, Fleishman's *Mansfield Park* and Tanner's *Lord Jim*, which is seeking to rectify this situation. However, his aims are also at once broader and narrower than the detailed explication of a single text—broader in the sense that he is concerned with establishing a methodology by which all multiple-point-of-view novels can be analysed, and narrower in the sense that he limits his study of *To the Lighthouse* to an examination of "the rhetorical effects of shifting points of view together with an objective analysis of the stylistics associated with each of those points of view".

Leaska's attempt to do justice to a single novel while saying something more general about the art of the novel is praiseworthy. Unfortunately, he is not totally successful in either his presentation or his integration of these two areas of his study. The author's initial exposition of his methodology is admirably succinct. However, he then goes on to present a summary of the various narrative stances available to the novelist that is much fuller than he needs for his immediate purpose—which is

simply to define the difference between novels in which the narrator mediates between the reader and the story and those in which he does not—and much slighter than he needs if his intention is to provide the student of his critical approach with a comprehensive study of point of view. Even more important are the misleading comments that result from Leaska's post-Jamesian bias. He seems unable to recognise, for example, that the omniscient narrator can adopt an all-knowing stance without necessarily ceasing to present his action dramatically.

In turning to *To the Lighthouse*, Leaska fails to demonstrate conclusively either that the occasional difficulties that the reader has in distinguishing between narrators have led to serious misinterpretations of the novel or that, by a close textual analysis, these different points of view can indeed be totally differentiated from each other. Thus, it cannot be stated with absolute certainty, to cite but one of Leaska's claims, that it is Mrs. Ramsay, anxious for the success of her dinner, who comments first about Mr. Bankes and then about the *Boeuf en Daube*, "He had eaten attentively. It was rich; it was tender. It was perfectly cooked." It is just as likely that the omniscient narrator makes the first of these comments and the gourmet Mr. Bankes the second. Moreover, it is not particularly crucial which way the lines are interpreted. Since the later chapters of Leaska's book make only occasional reference to possible confusions in points of view, the reader is led to the conclusion that he has raised, and then rather arbitrarily dropped, a non-issue.

The main body of this book is, in fact, through an examination of character, structure and imagery, devoted to a fairly straightforward presentation of the rather unusual, but not entirely original, view that Mrs. Ramsay is basically an egotist and that the reader must look beyond her for the novel's ideal. While Leaska advances his reading in a logical manner, he is not particularly persuasive because he is often guilty, rather more than many of the earlier critics of Virginia Woolf at whom he is extremely ready to point the finger of accusation, of "an eagerness to attach interpretation to fragments of the work before experiencing the work in its entirety". His thesis, for example, is much less convincing than that presented by Josephine Schaefer who makes coherent sense out of Mrs. Ramsay's faults without deviating radically from the traditional view of her character.

Leaska concludes his study with an analysis of various elements of style, such as sentence length, clause embedding and verb density, which is designed to help the reader in his task of distinguishing between the narrators. However, as is often the case with computerized studies of literary texts, his results either underline the obvious (he proves, for example, that Mr. Ramsay speaks in an abstract and intellectual manner) or are inconclusive.

Mitchell A. Leaska's *Virginia Woolf's 'Lighthouse'* is finally unsuccessful because, while claiming a highly scientific and logical approach, he in fact treats the novel in an extremely subjective and personal manner and is, indeed, often guilty of special pleading.

Mount St. Vincent University

DAVID M. MONAGHAN

*Sociology in its Place and Other Essays.* By W. G. Runciman. Cambridge University Press, 1970. Pp. vii, 236. \$7.50.

W. G. Runciman has already established a very considerable reputation as a scholar with unusual powers of comprehensibility and incisiveness. He boldly engages in discussions which range over a wide spectrum of the accepted academic disciplines and gets involved in very many of the recognized sub-fields (and their controversies) within them. This catholicity probably first came to the attention of many with the publication in 1963 of the widely acclaimed *Social Science and Political Theory*. In the volume under review are collected a number of essays, all of which, with the exception of the title essay, have been published before within the period 1963 to 1969.

Once again, the scope of these essays is very great, and it is no exaggeration to say that in all of them there is a conciseness of argument and a power of illumination which it would be difficult to match elsewhere. The essays are grouped in this collection in terms of their being (1) largely methodological, (2) largely empirical, and (3) largely philosophical. All of them can be described as Sociological in the sense of what Runciman understands "Sociology" to be. To express the matter in this careful way is dictated by the nature of the title essay in which Runciman, in a sustained, methodical and compact forty-four pages, does indeed 'put Sociology in its place'. In what manner this is done can only be outlined briefly here, but what is argued by Runciman seems to this reviewer to be so plausible, sane and congenial as to deserve some publicity.

This essay can be described as a well-reasoned attack (and, it should be noted, an attack by one who would have no hesitation in calling himself a Sociologist) on some prevalent assumptions and presumptions held by Sociologists as to the scientific standing of their discipline. Runciman's main point is that the claims that there is an autonomous science of sociology are spurious; neither by a distinctive method nor by a distinctive content can it be said properly to exist as such. He would see it rather as something under the name of which certain discoveries are made, certain idiographic explanations put forward, and series of empirical generalizations are formulated. All these contributions to knowledge can certainly be described as scientific in general, but where sociology fails is in ever claiming to have produced real theories. It is pointless, then, to speak of a "sociological theory" as if it were akin to, say, the theory of relativity. This view is based upon a skillful reworking of the Comteian hierarchy of the sciences in which Runciman argues that there are specialized social sciences (economics, and demography for example) and a social science which comprises history, anthropology and sociology. The distinctions between these latter three are conventional only and do not amount in any way at all to distinctions which would claim autonomy for any of them. The characteristic of all these social sciences which renders them in themselves non-theoretical (indeed, applied) sciences is that in order for their discoveries, ex-

planations and generalizations to be synthesized it would be necessary to "ground" them in a theory of psychology, in a manner similar to the way in which biological explanations rest on the theories of chemistry and physics. This of course raises the whole question of the problem of "methodological individualism" which has exercised thinking sociologists from time to time. Suffice it to say here that Runciman deals with that one too, claiming that fundamentally the social sciences can not but be about the behaviour of individuals. This does not mean, of course, that sociologists may no longer be interested in social systems, social relations, social institutions and the other things by which they justify their activities, but it does mean, says Runciman, that it is fruitless and misguided to talk as if we have established (or are likely to establish) laws concerning the operation of these unless those laws are grounded in a psychological theory which has the kind of synthesizing power by which a chemical or physical theory establishes its explanatory possibilities. (It should be pointed out that Runciman does not consider what now passes for theoretical psychology to be at all adequate for this).

It is difficult to convey in so short a space the richness of the arguments employed in the title essay, but enough has been said perhaps to convey the general tenor. The other essays in the collection are concerned with a sensible attack on "structuralism" (especially its Gallic variety as propounded by Lévi-Strauss) in which it is demonstrated that it can not be regarded as a distinctive doctrine nor a distinctive method; a discussion of the pitfalls and the possibilities in attempting to offer sociological explanations of religious beliefs (an essay which contains some apposite criticism of Weber and Durkheim); a careful argument in favour of regarding the categories of class, status and power as both empirically and conceptually distinct. The collection of empirically oriented essays comprises discussions of the well-known "embourgeoisement" thesis, an analysis of the charismatic nature of Nkrumah's leadership in Ghana, and (with C. R. Bagley) an investigation into attitudes to immigrants in Great Britain in terms of the ideas of status consistency and relative deprivation. The "philosophical" essays comprise discussions ranging from the problems of anthropological description, the general will, and the notion of equality in societies, to an essay on "false consciousness" in which Engels appears to be vindicated.

All in all, then, this is a book (very free from printing errors and pleasantly produced) well worth the attention of all social scientists and philosophers together with anyone else who is interested in trying to decide what sociology is. There is no doubt that Runciman's persuasive powers are a considerable force to be reckoned with and sociologists, in particular, should consider it mandatory to come to terms with his major arguments.

*University of King's College*

J. GRAHAM MORGAN

*Khrushchev Remembers*. Translated and edited by Strobe Talbott, with an Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Edward Crankshaw. Illustrated. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1970. Pp. xxviii, 639. \$12.50.

With the publication in the West of *Khrushchev Remembers* yet another controversial manuscript has filtered out of Soviet Russia. But unlike such similarly contentious works as Andrei Amalrik's *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?* and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*, the authorship as much as the significance of Khrushchev's reminiscences is loudly in dispute. British journalist and author of a 1966 biography of Khrushchev, Edward Crankshaw, who has contributed usually helpful general and chapter introductions as well as numerous explanatory footnotes to the edition, expresses himself "as sure as it is possible to be sure of anything that cannot be scientifically proved" that the text is the unmistakable voice of Nikita Khrushchev "speaking . . . from limbo". His American colleague, Harrison E. Salisbury, has concluded that the memoirs are "not . . . a fake", a judgment on their authenticity guardedly confirmed by some thirty specialists on Soviet politics following a recent State Department-sponsored conference on the subject in Washington. On the other hand, the highly respected historian of the Russian Communist Party, Leonard Schapiro, has dismissed the book as a "totally worthless" concoction of the K.G.B., while the Manchester *Guardian's* analyst of Soviet affairs, Victor Zorza, was equally certain he detected in it the work of the C.I.A.—not the first time these two secret police agencies have been simultaneously accused of siring the same child! For good measure, Khrushchev himself has formally denounced assertions that he passed on "memoirs or materials of this nature to either a foreign or a Soviet publishing house" as a typical fabrication of the "venal bourgeois press", without however denying that he had indeed compiled such reminiscences. In view of the extremely dubious route by which the recollections reached the West (via the mysterious K.G.B. literary agent, Victor Louis); their disparate times and circumstances of origin (tappings in and perhaps outside the family circle extending over a period of a half-decade); the number and range of hands involved in their editing and censoring (from son-in-law and ex-*Izvestia* editor, Aleksei Adzhubei, to at least one faction within the K.G.B. leadership, followed by their American translator and arranger, Strobe Talbott); and, not least of all, the indisputably political purposes behind the release of the work (although precisely *what* and *whose* purposes are matters of intense speculation), it is safe to predict that the Khrushchev compilation will furnish a fruitful source of contention among "Kremlinologists" for years to come.

Assuming the essential genuineness of the recollections, what is their value for Soviet studies? As an historical source dealing with the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, their countless distortions, omissions and contradictions severely limit their trustworthiness and hence utility. Thus Khrushchev's personal role in the pre- and post-war Stalin purges is carefully obscured; his survival through both he

attributes to mere luck and a fitful but enduring affection for him felt by his "sick" (Khrushchev's term) master. Both those factors, though, were surely subordinate to his own seemingly limitless political cunning and adaptability within the Stalinist system, of which ample evidence is presented here (often disingenuously). By the same token, almost nothing is said about the complex, life-and-death power struggle within the "collective leadership" which succeeded Stalin in 1953 and out of which Khrushchev emerged four years later as the undisputed ruler of the U.S.S.R. To hear Khrushchev tell the story, once the heirs had disposed of Beria, their much-feared common enemy, he himself rose to primacy by a kind of mutually agreed consensus. The acutely embarrassing Hungarian "mutiny" of 1956 is alternately attributed to the prolonged "abuse of power" by Stalin and his local puppet, Rakosi, to the unscrupulous and illegal actions of an anti-Party clique headed by Imre Nagy, and finally to "waves of bourgeois agents and counter-revolutionary emigrés" flown into Budapest in American aircraft. Yet such glaring weaknesses in Khrushchev's account are occasionally balanced by passages of surprising candour, as for example his straightforward assignment of immediate responsibility for the outbreak of the Korean War to Communist Premier Kim Il-sung's desire "to prod South Korea with the point of a bayonet".

Probably the most valuable, and fascinating, portion of the book is the first seven-tenths which deals with the reign of "Joseph I", as Khrushchev calls Stalin. The similarities between the banality, sycophancy, crudity and brutality which characterized the Byzantine court life and political manoeuvring surrounding Stalin and Hitler (the latter recorded again in Albert Speer's recent memoirs) are striking. The two "totalitarian" dictators ruled their respective empires in an equally arbitrary, haphazard and terroristic fashion, most noticeably during their last years in power. Their differing attitudes towards alcoholic drink aside, they shared a pervasive fear of assassination, a predilection for apparently endless viewing of foreign (especially "western") films and working habits which turned night into day in blithe disregard of the more conventional constitutions of their weary associates.

Finally, the reminiscences are not without their humourous moments, which at the same time manage to reveal the fearful isolation of the Soviet leadership from the outside world, as when Khrushchev marvels that Nelson Rockefeller appeared to him "fairly democratically dressed" at the 1955 Geneva summit meeting, or when he found the atmosphere in Peking during a visit the previous year "typically oriental".

For the general reader, at whom it must be concluded the book is chiefly aimed, *Khrushchev Remembers* contains numerous interesting anecdotes concerning figures (Churchill, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Elizabeth II) whom he encountered during his years of ascendancy. An album of seventy well-chosen photographs is also included. Less helpful is the unannotated appendix of Khrushchev's "secret speech" denouncing Stalin's crimes before the 20th Party Congress in 1956, which

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requires the informed commentary by Bertram D. Wolfe (printed together under the title *Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost*, N.Y., 1957) to make it really intelligible.

Dalhousie University

LAWRENCE D. STOKES

*Walking On the Greenhouse Roof.* By Wally Keeler. Montreal: Delta, Canada, 1970. Pp. 112. \$2.50.

*Outerings.* By Eugene McNamara. Montreal: Delta, Canada, 1970. np. \$1.00.

*The Ties of Time.* By John Lachs. Montreal: Delta, Canada, 1970. np. \$1.00.

*Leeway Grass.* By Peter Van Toorn. Montreal: Delta, Canada, 1970. np. \$1.50.

*Text For Nausikaa.* By Michael Harris. Montreal: Delta, Canada, 1970. Pp. 41. \$2.50.

*Mandalas.* By John Douglas. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1970. np. \$4.00.

*The Bandit.* By Kenneth McRitchie. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1970. np. \$2.00.

*Cutty Sark.* By Len Gasparini. Kingston: Quarry Press, 1970. Pp. 21. \$2.00.

*Mouth.* By Seymour Mayne. Kingston: Quarry Press, 1970. Pp. 61. \$2.50.

*Earth Charm: Heard So Early.* By Robert Gibbs. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Books, 1970. Pp. 64. \$2.00.

*Four Myths for Sam Perry.* By Frank Davey. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1970. np. \$2.00.

*Weeds.* By Frank Davey. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1970. np. \$3.50.

*The Great Bear Lake Meditations.* By J. Michael Yates. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1970. np. \$5.95 / \$2.95.

The small presses of Canada continue to serve its growing number of poets well. From coast to coast, from Fiddlehead Books in the Maritimes, through Delta, Canada, in Montreal, Quarry Press in Kingston, Oberon Press in Ottawa, Coach House and Anansi presses in Toronto, out to Talonbooks on the West Coast (and these are not all), the small presses get books, especially books by young authors, out before the public. Not all these books are good; some, indeed, are very poor, but how much worse would our cultural life be if these writers had no outlet for their work, no opportunity to get it before their putative public. These small presses make little if any money: truly, they exist to serve the muse. We should be grateful.

Delta, Canada has tended to use its Buckbook series to introduce new poets, and this has been a very worthwhile venture. It has managed to keep the price down on most Delta books, however, thus making it easier for the ordinary reader to buy new and perhaps worthwhile work.

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It is a bit strange, then, that Delta has given such a large, unwieldy book to Wally Keeler for his first publication. Alec Lucas, in his Introduction, says, "There is nothing here . . . of the pellet-like trait often apparent in volumes of slim verse squeezed out year by year. There is nothing here of a fear of words and of unduly cautious polishing". And it's true that Keeler demonstrates that he has a large appetite for life, love, and sex. Still, a slightly slimmer volume would have forced him to apply just a little self-discipline, and saved us from the far too many four-line poems like "Onono's Nipples": "When I look into/a cup of clear tea/I envision Onono's/priceless nipples". Lucas calls Keeler a "love poet": he certainly does write about having a lot of women, in the good old-fashioned Layton style, although with a greater and more naive delight that this could be happening to him. And, although it's nice to report that he doesn't share *Playboy's* interest in huge breasts, I think I counted about twenty uses of the phrase "small breasts", which is just too much of a good thing. A few non-"love" poems demonstrate Keeler's sharp awareness of the world around him, and his ability sometimes to find images that show forth that world in a new light. But he's still an apprentice, and he needs to realize this fact. *Walking On the Greenhouse Roof* is not a bad book, but it's far too self-indulgent.

Eugene McNamara's *Outering*: contains some enjoyable poems, especially the meditation "Dark at the Closing". But McNamara's main talent is for short evocative poems which can't stand up too well in isolation. There aren't enough poems here to develop a coherent and unified emotional whole. A larger collection might have served McNamara better.

John Lach's *The Ties of Time* is a first book published 5 or 6 years after the author had quit writing poetry to concentrate on philosophical prose. As Glen Siebrasse points out in his Introduction, the poems contain the seeds of the later prose. They are tough intelligent poems, which make up in ideas what they lack in rhythmic and verbal polish. The language is not complex, but the basic concerns with the phenomenological world and the illusions we erect there is. "Behind the Facade of this Race" gives a good idea of what Lachs is about:

Behind the  
 soft provocative order of your lines  
 I did not expect the organs' disarray.  
 A thin membrane of beauty hides  
                   decay  
 your young smile  
 superimposed on nature  
 deceives, below the elegant  
 mouth lurk degenerate kidneys  
 lush rivers of bad blood.

As *Text For Nausikaa* amply demonstrates, Michael Harris is interested in

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all kinds of poetry, concrete as well as traditional forms. The sequence, for everything in this book is part of a single whole, is full of a variety of word-games which often take full advantage of what type can do to create pictures. The poems, however, all have a literal meaning, which their shapes only help to explicate. This is not a book everybody will like, but for those interested in stylistic experimentation, it will prove very interesting indeed.

Peter Van Toorn comes on a little too strong in his personal note when he says, "I work approximately one hundred hours on every line in a poem", and follows that statement with the first poem, the first line of which is "Like something sacred". He would have done us all (including himself) a favour had he eschewed such heroics. For many of these poems are good, very good. There is a fine wit in such lines as these:

I'm an animal  
 I take it standing up  
 I'm a god  
 I take it lying down  
 I'm wounded  
 my brain is carved in two  
 my antlers stick out from a snowbank  
 like winter branches  
 ("The Snow Remover Is Coming")

That wit, allied with a wide-ranging interest in literature, informs such strange and powerfully intelligent poems as the long "Icarus like Crane", "Baudelaire", and "Swinburne's Garden", which is definitely the showpiece of the collection. These poems do not reveal their inward workings easily. They are solid achievement, learned, philosophical, and well worth the struggle they must have cost. *Leeway Grass* is a good book in itself: as an augur of better things to come, it is even more exciting.

John Douglas appeared in last year's Anansi anthology, and now he has a book of his own out from Coach House Press. *Mandalas* is a collection of 50 short "things" made with words. They seem most often to lack coherence, the words sitting in various places on the page with no real connections among them. "Blue Sand Mandala", however, is quite nice:

laughing beneath  
           the spread  
           of antlers  
 crisp stands  
 the shelf of winter  
           trees  
 a racoon  
       washing in the pool



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I don't know who Kenneth McRitchie is, but on the evidence of *The Bandit*, I would say he is still in his teens. It appears he has supplied his own drawings to accompany the poems in this little book. They are very nice, and the poems are "nice" too, quiet, gentle poems that look like first poems, but by someone who truly likes words. Rhymes occur throughout the book; the lyric style of the young poet has surely been influenced by Rock lyricism. We shall see that influence more and more in the years ahead, I suspect.

Len Gasparini is older, in his late twenties, and he would have us believe, on the evidence of these poems, that he's "been around". But I find that most of these poems are just boring, some because they are too obvious ("Solitary Confinement"), some because the tough guy persona fails to generate any sense of verisimilitude. There is nothing rhythmically exciting about these poems, but I suppose there are readers who will enjoy listening to Gasparini's sarcastic comments on Canadian society: "And we ride the empty subway home/Cursing this country's affluence/That can't afford—or is afraid/To legalize whoredom and abortion". If those lines strike a sympathetic chord, this is a book you will enjoy.

Seymour Mayne is a young Montreal poet who has been turning out chapbooks by the dozen during the past seven years. *Mouth* is his largest collection yet, and it contains some really exciting poetry. Mayne can write and is often quite witty in his juxtapositions. Still, some of the poems aren't worth the effort that obviously went into their creation. Mayne has always had a light touch in his sex poems; in *Mouth*, the poems tend to be about love as well as sex, but that light touch is still there, and these poems are among the most enjoyable in the book, as this gentle poem shows:

Swung again your red hair  
burns

Sting  
of those strands  
against my face

Your heat  
I still smell  
weeks later

Absent now  
you  
slept so close  
upon my sleeping  
arm

Mayne's sharp eye and equally sharp vocabulary are put to full use in "Fang of Light", a long poem about the internal/external man in all of us. It's not a complete success, but it's a fascinating experiment in form and substance, and suggests

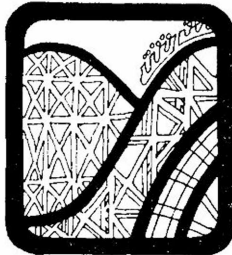
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that Mayne is moving into new areas of poetry that will severely test his talent. It is to his credit that he is doing so, and *Mouth* is an interesting book, not least because here he is beginning that exciting journey.

Robert Gibbs writes a gentle open poetry that charms with its ingenuousness. That charm has something to do with the open form, the games with words, and the very real attempts to clearly see and articulate the land in which he lives. This is not to suggest that he is a mere landscape poet in a good old Fredericton tradition, for his are poems of self-discovery. Poem after poem resolves itself inwardly as the poet/speaker comes to grips with the world around him and thereby with his self. There are some fascinating poems concerning real or imagined memory, those other lives we have all led at some earlier time. *Earth Charms Heard So Early* is dedicated to Elizabeth Brewster, and Gibbs's poetic virtues are similar to hers. It is a friendly, enjoyable book. (It is too bad there are so many misprints in it, but don't let that put you off.)

Frank Davey is one of the original *Tish* poets, a poet of strongly held convictions about the kind of poetry he should write. These two books offer fascinating evidence about the kind of poetry he is attempting, and the problems inherent in it. Davey's form, and a great deal of his attitude towards content, owe much to Charles Olson's theories. He writes very projective verse and is willing quite often to let his allusions fall where they may. He will also, at times, adopt a very public, even political, stance in his poems.

Of the two books, *Four Myths For Sam Perry* is the lesser. There are some good poems in it, but too often Davey is unable to fulfill his vision. In the first section, "A Song for Mary" and "The Making", two very personal poems, succeed brilliantly. In Part II he attempts political poetry but gets, not only rhetoric, but bad rhetoric. He is attempting the wrong *kind* of statement (John Newlove is a poet Davey could learn from here, for he has the proper *tone*, and the objectivity (assumed) to work these political subjects into his poems with complete propriety). The two Sam Perry poems which form the climax of the book are noble attempts which fail because Sam Perry (whatever Davey may believe) is just not a sufficiently large person to sustain the kind of "godhood" Davey wishes to thrust upon him: we can't believe in it. Indeed, it is because these poems fail as *myths* that they don't work at all, and yet that is the only way they can work. An interesting experiment precisely because it failed, however, for it carries an important lesson.

*Weeds*, on the other hand, is a very successful book. It is a more unified and more natural work, the poems growing out of Davey's own experience. Although his use of the comma as a sign of rhythm is overdone and bothersome, the poems read very well. Most importantly, the persona is very present, and very believable. We learn of a more central politics here, R. D. Laing's "Politics of the

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Family", perhaps. "Accumulation" is a central word and it effectively describes the process of the book. The poems grow, weed-like, slowly giving us an accumulative sense of the poet's situation. The poems trace a marriage through its acts of dissolution. The garden (Eden, etc.,) is lost as his wife is lost: this metaphor, with all its rich ambiguities, is beautifully handled throughout. *Weeds* is a fine book of poems.

J. Michael Yates's *The Great Bear Lake Meditations* is perhaps the single most profound and complex book in this whole batch. A long and arduous sequence of prose/poem meditations on the North in all its symbolic and mythic implications, it demands an equally arduous intellectual and emotional response from the reader. I can't begin to do justice to it here, so I will only suggest that Yates has truly grappled with his vision in the bright long Northern night of the soul. The results of this struggle are these brilliantly etched poems, which deal with the "cold, its clarity", and with the metaphysical as well as physical contrasts between civilization and the wilderness, both without and within. One short excerpt can barely begin to suggest the kind of writing to be found in this book:

Again and again I go away from you and send back only words. Where I am is very cold and the ice figures I collect for you never, somehow, survive the transport. And so these small black tracks upon the page. Where you are is too warm for me. This message is a map which shows my exact coordinates at this moment. Follow it. Try to find me. I should like to be here when you arrive, but in this weather it is necessary to keep moving.

This is a book that will surely compel attention for a long time to come.

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