

## Book Reviews

*The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*. Volume I. 1796-1801. Edited by Edwin W. Marris, Jr. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975. Pp. xcvi, 292. \$25.00.

Over thirty years ago, these pages carried a review of E.V. Lucas's 1935 edition of *The Letters of Charles Lamb* by W.J. Sykes. Mr. Sykes's appreciative essay set forth all that was characteristic and charming in Lamb's letters, and expressed gratitude for "Mr. Lucas's comprehensive collection". Since that time, however, Lucas's work has failed to bear critical scrutiny. As early as 1897, W.C. Hazlitt complained of the "self-imposed duty of censorship" that editors from Talfourd to Ainger brought to their work. By 1948, George L. Barnett's comparison of the Lucas edition with the extant manuscripts and with Harper's unexpurgated edition, printed in 1905 for the select few of the Boston Bibliophile Society, led him to charge that "Lucas has failed to avoid the tendency of editors of Lamb's letters to perpetuate errors and to inaugurate others by overzealous emendation, excessive editing, and downright carelessness." On the evidence of Lucas's omissions, inaccuracies, and reliance on previous faulty texts, including his own earlier edition of 1903-05, Barnett concluded that a definitive edition of Lamb's letters had yet to be produced. We need wait no longer — to commemorate the bicentenary of Lamb's birth, Edwin Marris and Cornell University Press have filled the need for an edition of the letters of both brother and sister that lives up to the standards of modern scholarship.

Marris's collation of previous texts and consultation of the original manuscripts, where they still exist, has resulted in the appendage of meticulous bibliographical notes to each letter, while his conscientious scholarship has added a wealth of informative notes convenient to the material they illuminate. He has provided an exhaustive biographical and critical introduction and, thoughtfully, an index for each volume. His fidelity to Lamb's text is exemplary, extending even to an attempt to preserve signs of Lamb's notorious calligraphic wit and exuberance. He is a serviceable editor, allowing Lamb to speak for himself, but never far to seek when his reader requires elucidation.

The first volume contains only letters written by Charles, since Mary's earliest extant letter is dated 21 July 1802. His correspondence with Manning, the Lloyds,

Godwin, and Wordsworth included here establishes his famed sincerity and critical intelligence, which not even Wordsworth's chilly reply to his reservations concerning the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads* could wither. But the most important phase of these early years is found in the correspondence with Coleridge, accounting for almost half the letters here preserved. As George Whalley has argued, the intelligence and insight of these letters aided Coleridge in the discovery of a more congenial poetic voice in the crucial years 1796-97. For Lamb, the pivotal event of this period, and indeed of his whole life, was Mary's tragic slaying of her mother in a fit of madness. In a letter to Coleridge dated 27 September 1796, Lamb recounts the events surrounding the stabbing in a clear, stately prose that surmounts the turbulence of his disrupted domestic life. Coleridge's answer to his plea to "write, — as religious a letter as possible" contributed to what Lamb repeatedly calls his "tranquillity" in the aftermath, though Lamb's own firm resolution must have been a decisive factor in maintaining his mental stability through the calamity. Though he could wistfully recall the Edenic days (and nights) of "pipes, tobacco, Egghot, welch Rabbits, metaphysics & Poetry" at the Salutation and Cat during the previous winter, Lamb now willingly faced the world that was all before him. As Whalley has pointed out, these letters reveal that "a subtle but profound maturity had come to Lamb," liberating him from a chronic dependence on Coleridge's intelligence and approval.

Though in these letters Lamb praised the epic sublimity of "Religious Musings", he urged Coleridge to develop a more personal and sincere voice than his soaring Miltonics had so far evinced. "Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge," he wrote on 8 November 1796, "or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness; for simplicity springs spontaneous from the heart, and carries into daylight its own modest buds and genuine, sweet, and clear flowers of expression." These "genuine, sweet, and clear flowers" bore fruit in the language of Coleridge's conversation poems, in which the spontaneity of response to a moment of personal experience co-exists with a modesty that Lamb regarded as too often violated by Coleridge's metaphysical impulses. Lamb found "The Eolian Harp" "a charming poem throughout", second only in his estimation to the "Religious Musings", and himself became the central figure in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", to which he only half-jokingly referred as "your Satire upon me". The qualities which Lamb treasured in Rousseau's *Confessions* he urged on his friend: "the same frankness, the same openness of heart, the same disclosure of all the most hidden and delicate affections of the mind." In advocating attention to the "affections of the mind", Lamb might justly claim to have contributed to the second of Coleridge's major strains, the meditative that follows upon the mysterious.

Yet, as De Quincey reminds us, Lamb deserves to be remembered as a man of genius in his own right, and not merely as the friend and collaborator of Coleridge. Pater located that genius in Lamb's humour (as distinct from his wit), in "the laughter which blends with tears . . . and which, in its most exquisite motives, is one with pity." Lamb is historically important as friend of poets, critic of the drama, and reviver of our interest in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, but it is for his mastery of the personal, reflective voice in his essays that he is loved and read. That

their union of pathos and nostalgia never lapses into mere sentiment is a victory of art over nature, and of Lamb over himself. Haunted all his life by the bleak spectre of insanity, he continually struggled to maintain his equilibrium through the dizzying spells of manic-depression that afflicted him only somewhat less than his sister. He himself spent six weeks in a madhouse near Hoxton at the end of 1795, and, after the sorrowful events of 1796, at the age of twenty-one, he devoted himself to the welfare of his sister, whose disorder recurred under the slightest strain. "I have something more to do than to feel," he wrote Coleridge as he surveyed the torn remnant of his family, "I must be serious, circumspect, & deeply religious thro' life & by such means may *both* of us escape madness in future." J. B. Priestley, who preferred the letters to the essays, has remarked on the "depths of suffering that he never consciously revealed, though behind many a phrase of his we catch a glimpse of the darkness." And so it is with both his letters and his essays: the brilliance of his wit refracted through the tears of his sorrow illuminates a charmed circle from which a sensitive and urbane persona banishes gloom to a salutary distance.

For Lamb's imagination was characterized by urbanity, in a double sense that he would have appreciated. Born within the peaceful enclosure of the Temple, he was in Blunden's phrase a "boy of waking dreams", though the busy crowd of Fleet Street hurried by just beyond his walls. He grew up in a garden of art, where the entrance to the Inner Temple-hall, with its winged horse, stately arms, and frescoes of the Virtues, supplied him with his "first hint of allegory". Of Blakesware manor, in Hertfordshire, where his grandmother was housekeeper, his most vivid recollections were "the old busts of the Twelve Caesars, that had been Emperors of Rome", and the faded tapestries in the vast, empty rooms that filled him with visions of "all Ovid on the walls". For this creature of romance and antiquity, the medieval cloister of Christ's Hospital merely augmented the paradise of childhood, although he suffered there the disappointment of becoming only a deputy Grecian (Coleridge was a Grecian), because of his stammer. Lamb's enthusiasm at seeing his first play ("all feeling was absorbed in vision") was predictable in one for whom life had always been viewed through the medium of art.

Lamb's celebrated indifference to external nature was a feature of the urban Romantic imagination. The man who preferred "that world before perspective" depicted on old china, and who could delight in a Mrs. Battle for whom the "nice verdant carpet" covering a whist-table was "next to nature's", is the man who wrote to Wordsworth (30 January 1801):

Separate from the pleasure of your company, I dont mu[ch] care if I never see a mountain in my life. — I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments, as any of you Mountaineers can have done with dead nature. The Lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street, the innumerable trades, tradesmen and customers, coaches, waggons, play houses, all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden, the very women of the Town, the Watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles; — life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night, the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street, the

crowds, the very dirt & mud, the Sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print shops, the old Book stalls, parsons cheap'ning books, coffee houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes, London itself, a pantomime and a masquerade, all these things work themselves into my mind and feed me without a power of satiating me.

Carlyle, whose sublime strictures he could not escape, thought Lamb "Cockney to the marrow". Indeed, Lamb's vision of London street life in terms of drama and his preference for art over nature mark his imaginative kinship with Blake, whose creative powers were after all only far more fierce than Lamb's, and with Keats, to whose greater genius he bequeathed the world of romance.

Far from giving up poetry and "every vestige of past vanities of that kind" as he threatened to do after the crisis of 1796, Lamb survived as an artist precisely because he was an artist. His responsibilities were great, and his sense of loss, expressed in the poem "The Old Familiar Faces" (1798), acute:

Ghost-like, I paced round the haunts of my childhood.  
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,  
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Yet he struggled to maintain his self-possession, and his art is a product of his inner conflict between indulgence and restraint. For Lamb, art becomes an exercise of control over recalcitrant and chaotic materials, and creation the calling of them "into act and form". His essay on "The Sanity of True Genius" denies Dryden's aphorism that "Great wits are sure to madness near allied." Lamb's "true poet" is

not possessed by his subject, but had *dominion* over it. . . . His ideal tribes submit to policy; his very monsters are tamed to his hand, even as that wild sea-brood, shepherded by Proteus. . . . Herein the great and the little wits are differenced; that if the latter wander even so little from nature or actual existence, they lose themselves, and their readers.

Lamb's emphasis on self-control is one of his primary aesthetic categories. In the aptly-titled essay, "Stage Illusion", he comments on the actor's ability to control his audience's responses by maintaining control over himself and the illusion of his role; as an example, he refers to the performance of the comedian Jack Bannister, who "never once lost his self-possession . . . his confidence in his own resources never once deserted him." Lamb's determination that he had "something more to do than to feel" preserved his creative powers through the crisis, and as time passed his "confidence in his own resources" grew. Writing to Wordsworth late in life (22 January 1830), after he had settled at semi-rural Enfield, he continued to praise "the fine indifferent pageants of Fleet Street" and concluded:

A garden was the primitive prison, till man, with Promethean felicity and boldness, luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followed Babylon, Ninevah, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses,

satires, epigrams, puns, — these all came in on the town part, and the thither side of innocence.

Lamb, according to his version of the fortunate fall, left his garden, not without regret, but with a determination, as he told Manning (8 February 1800), "to live a merry Life in the midst of Sinners." What marks Lamb is that which, for Lionel Trilling in *The Liberal Imagination*, is the mark of the artist: "his power to shape the material of pain we all have." Lamb shaped his material as he had shaped himself, and what he found on "the thither side of innocence" was not the garden of nature but the city of art.

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*Canadian-American Relations in Wartime: From the Great War to the Cold War.* By R.D. Cuff and J.L. Granatstein. Toronto: Hakkert, 1975. Pp. xiii, 205.

There is something delightfully arbitrary about the way in which historians apply themselves to the task of explaining the complex political, social and economic phenomena of the human condition. Armed with a more or less richly endowed corpus of knowledge, training and experience (and hence with a not inconsiderable supply of expectations), but dedicated as well to the somewhat conflicting prerequisites of an 'open mind' (secured, at the outset, by a relative ignorance of the 'facts' which they intend to investigate), they develop explanations of reality which typically draw attention to a multiplicity of causal factors, yet give special pride of place to only one or two. Since in the real world of political, social and economic affairs almost everything is related to almost everything else, the scope for variety of 'interpretation' (putting different factors in first place) is impressively wide, and provides an immensely fruitful source of enjoyable disputation within the historical profession.

Professors Cuff and Granatstein in this collection of eight beautifully written essays — six of them jointly authored, three of them published here for the first time — have chosen Canadian-American relations as their focus of attention and have selected 'war', both hot and cold, as the causal factor upon which they wish to place special emphasis. With a slightly different line of argument, but with equally persuasive facility, they could have settled, no doubt, upon some other appropriate influence — geography, for example, or the expansive magnetism of the American political culture, or the decline of the British navy, or the rise of the American gross national product, or the liberal pragmatism of the Canadian political elite, or whatever. But they argue instead that the "objective fact of war has played a particularly significant part in the evolution of Canadian-American relations, forcing adjustments and readjustments that often overrode the wishes of the political leaders." It follows that the "periods of war in the twentieth century . . . are even more important than the years of peace in understanding the factors that

moulded and shaped the nature of our present." (ix) Among the many available working premises, this is as convincing as any (even if it may have occurred to them as a potentially unifying thematic device only after some of their earlier essays had been written). Since it generates interesting lines of discussion, it presumably needs no further defence.

The theme does, in fact, perform successfully as a source of cohesion in the collection as a whole, although the essays are not all written at the same level of generality and evidence, and taken individually they may appeal in different ways to different readers. The first three, for example, are concerned essentially with the politics and administration of Canada-United States economic relations during World War I, and have a monographic research quality which may be attractive more to specialists in the period than to the intelligent layman. The discussions become somewhat more generalized in Chapters Four and Five, which are devoted respectively to the origins and significance of the Hyde Park Declaration of 1941, and to Canadian policy-makers' perceptions of the overall evolution of Canadian-American relations during World War II. Chapters Five, Six and Seven consist in turn of reflective essays rather than research pieces. Two of them deal with the problem of interpreting the Canadian-American relationship in the context of the cold war, and the third is a discussion of the implications of the Canadian tendency to seek 'exemption' from American economic policies when these appear to pose a particular hazard for the Canadian economy. This progress from the specific to the general doubtless reflects in part the authors' steadily diminishing access to primary source materials as they work through their period and come under the confining influences of the "thirty-year rule", which in Canada still constricts the historian's access to the juiciest official documents. The irony in the present case is that the essays that are least well documented are also by far the most fun.

But a theme does not a thesis make. For that there must be more than a posited causal influence (war) and a substantive field of study (Canadian-American relations). There must be in addition a more or less specific phenomenon which the causal factor is presumed to explain, and a reason for linking the two. If one were to predict from the authors' various contributions to *The Canadian Forum*, one would expect them to argue in particular that the demands of war in the twentieth century have produced a condition of economic integration with the United States so extensive as to undermine the independence of Canadian foreign policy. They might be expected to proclaim as well that one of the effects of this development has been to render the "revisionist" thesis in cold war historiography as relevant for the Canadian context as some have presumed it to be for the American.

A close examination of their text, however, reveals that they are not yet prepared in their more reflective work to carry this bald thesis quite so far. They argue with justifiable conviction that both world wars produced elaborate bureaucratic and institutional mechanisms for ensuring the co-ordination of Canadian and American economic policy, and they observe that by imposing strains on the capacity of the British to maintain the traditional pattern of Anglo-Canadian trade, the two conflicts also accelerated the process of North American economic integration more generally. But the degree to which these developments can

actually be held to account for Canadian diplomatic strategies and security arrangements in the post-1945 period is a question which they ultimately leave open — as indeed they should, given the evidence available thus far, and given their reluctance in any case to place all their faith in the explanatory power of the economic 'variable'. In Chapter Six, for example, the similarities in the assumptions and purposes of Canadian and American policies abroad after World War II are attributed, not to the forces of economics, but to the fact that the central decision-makers in the two countries (Dean Acheson and Lester Pearson are viewed as the principal examples) subscribed to essentially the same beliefs. To the extent that they disagreed, it was largely because the two governments within which they functioned were of widely disparate power and hence played substantially divergent roles. The authors are thus drawn to conclude that "It is difficult to believe that if External Affairs had taken over the State Department the results would have been much different." (129) Perhaps they are right, but a genuine revisionist would say at the very least that the point was trivial, and would insist on regarding the economic factor as much more fundamental.

In the end, of course, this points to the principal obstacle in the way of securing a final or conclusive answer to the question of what 'caused' Canadian-American relations to assume the form they did after 1945. For a question of this sort simply cannot be settled by single answers at all — even if they have dimensions so grandly expansive as the answer, "War". Messrs. Cuff and Granatstein know this very well, and that, even more than their uncertainties of evidence, explains why, for example, they pay obeisance, to the revisionist thesis, yet find themselves unable to adopt it to the exclusion of other possibilities. It also explains why the factor of "war", to which they give such prominence in their title and their Preface, is ultimately exposed as a house with many inhabitants.

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*Blood Ties.* By David Adams Richards. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1976. Pp. 278. \$11.95.

Realism still thrives in the Canadian novel, as it does in daily life, and nowhere is this more evident than in the regionalism of our contemporary fiction. If it is hard to think of a current American novelist who has caught the feel of life at a certain time and place in a series of novels (Larry McMurtry, author of *The Last Picture Show*, might come closest), almost all the exciting Canadian fiction of the last two decades has been concerned to record a shared experience, to get the texture of a known way of life absolutely right. As a contrast to Margaret Laurence's *Manawaka* or Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain Street*, fictional worlds which go on existing novel after novel, consider John Barth's changing use of his home terrain, Maryland's Eastern Shore. Whatever the reasons for this difference, it seems that the Canadian

novelist, not yet lost in his own funhouse, still performs the traditional function of the realistic novel in offering counsel to an audience newly cut off from traditional wisdom.

In his second novel, *Blood Ties*, David Adams Richards makes it clear that we have another young (25) and powerful regionalist. This novel has the same northern New Brunswick setting and many of the same characters as his promising first novel, *The Coming of Winter* (1974); it is, in effect, the second chapter of a larger saga. The landscape of both Richards' novels has the simple, archetypal contours of Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley*: the mill town twenty miles upriver from the sweeping bay and larger gulf, the farmed-out downriver flatlands, the wilder, hillier forest country upriver. But Buckler's pastoral scene has been replaced by a polluted and dying one, one that numbs its inhabitants into a somnambulism of blue-collar drudgery and alcoholic escape. The descendants of the Irish-Catholic settlers of one hundred years ago still live there, but the farms are no longer farmed, the manual work which takes their place is scarring and crippling, the excitement has gone out of sex (the sex has mainly gone, too). The symbol of all this in both novels is the loss of belief in the religious ceremonies which held the community together. This novel begins with a delicately-charged scene: the women of the family go through the daily routine of changing and putting to bed the senile old vegetable of a grandmother, whose only sign of life occurs when the rosary is put in her fingers. Soon we see the parish church ("The church stood with the cross pointing into the sky and nothing") and meet the priest, a man in his seventies fond of threatening his parishioners with hell for such matters as not participating in the church picnic. One of the characters is a boy who steals candles from the church to create his own version of peace in his room — and to provoke God into declaring Himself by punishing him. For Richards, as for many Canadian novelists, the wounds of loss are too fresh for them to be the material of black comedy.

*The Coming of Winter* presented two weeks in which the central character, Kevin Dulse, has a friend kill himself in a car accident, turns twenty-one, drinks himself out of his mind on two occasions, and finally, for lack of anything better to do, marries without love and settles into life as a labourer at the paper mill. Winter comes with a vengeance in Richards country. This second novel, *Blood Ties*, marks a definite advance: the conflicts are sharper, the characters more varied, the style more distinctive and yet less obtrusive; the wild humour which kept the first book from sinking in a sea of lugubriousness is now central. The novel presents the downriver family of MacDurmots, and particularly the three children: rebellious Leah, now unhappily married to the brute she has chosen (and made); Cathy, in her late teens, who is able at the book's end to leave for the unimaginable, much-imagined life in the city; Orville, the candle-stealer. The story revolves around Cathy — revolves around, since, as in the first novel, the central character is only one (though the central one) of many narrative viewpoints. Nothing much happens, but the experience is kept rich and subtle by the contrasting perspectives within it and by the memories it unlocks. In the same way, the two novels complement and interpret each other: they interlock without interacting in the same manner as



Margaret Laurence's *A Jest of God* and *The Fire-Dwellers*. We never meet Cathy in Kevin's story, and "that Kevin guy" is glimpsed but never speaks in her story, but a trip downriver by Kevin and his drunken, desperate friend John Delano (the Best Supporting Actor in each book) is begun in the first novel and completed later that same evening in the second. Paradoxically, the brooding presence behind these interlocking regional sagas is William Faulkner, sole owner and proprietor of Yoknapatawpha County in northern Mississippi; if our Canadian regionalists lack his American tall-tale exuberance (this is no climate for Ike Snopes and his cow) and his experiments in technique, they share his fascination with the special, life-like irony which results from juxtaposition without interaction. The two Cameron sisters in Margaret Laurence never suspect how much agony they share, how much sympathy the other needs; here, the death of Kevin's friend and Kevin's own marriage, his two great ordeals, occur within four pages at the end of Cathy's story and are significant only as half-understood reasons for John's reappearance. If you have already read *The Coming of Winter*, it is bizarre to hear John insisting drunkenly that he's been at a wedding: "Fuckin asshole that's whose. . . Fuckin good time — we stole a pig and put it in his car."

James Reaney has said that southwestern Ontario must be the most inarticulate region of the earth; Richards' stretch of New Brunswick would give him a run for his money. In fact, Richards' distinctive achievement is that he has made a new and striking speech out of inarticulateness. The clumsy, oblique, ritualized life of his characters distils itself into their stiff, repetitious, angular, terse speech: it is as if their lives in this rough and sweeping landscape speak through them (their profanity bespeaking the profaned land, for instance). In the same way, the narrative voice shares the stiff, clumsy, repetitious, basic-vocabulary rhythms of the characters' own voices. We have a measure of how thoroughly and powerfully we have been immersed in this river speech when other kinds of language occur in the novel, as they occasionally do. When, at the novel's end, a middle-aged couple from New York buy the old family property as an artists' retreat, Richards presents the clash, not as melodrama or satire aimed at the New Romans, but as comedy: the newcomers' indignant rhetoric about leaving "any country that claims to be democratic and forces the populace into an unwanted war" provokes agreement from Cathy's uncle in the following terms: "'Ya,' Lorne said. 'It's bad like that but you have to beat the communists don'tcha or they'll take over the world — and all the kids are on the dope now and everything, and they all wanta be communists and everything — as far as I'm concerned.'" Behind this use of voice is a subtle perception about language itself: its obliquities nourish as well as numb. If the deadness of his characters' lives comes, again and again, from their inability to speak out to each other at the crucial moment ("the cold of not saying," as Cathy registers it), that inadequacy preserves and feeds real emotional depths — just as winter does not kill, but preserves the life in nature by deadening it. If family ties are wrenched apart by the violent needs of Richards' young protagonists, an underlying bond of love and understanding can never be violated because it can never be voiced.

So far, Richards' creation of a community of experience occurs at the expense of plot, of narrative drive. Neither novel has enough of a story — or, each has many stories which refuse to crystallize into one cleanly-shaped narrative. They seem all background and no foreground, all conflicts and no choices. More of the fabulation prized so highly south of the border would no doubt cut Richards' homebrew nicely.

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*Bruce Stovel*

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*Out of My System: Psychoanalysis, Ideology And Critical Method.* By Frederick Crews. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975. Pp. 214.

This is, in many ways, an unusual book. The range of contents alone is uncommon enough since Crews has the happy facility of being able to discuss with equal sophistication both literature and psychology — literary theory, Northrop Frye and Joseph Conrad as well as Freud, Norman O. Brown and Wilhelm Reich. Crew's ability to bring together the study of literature and psychology is his most valuable asset. But what predominantly gives this book its unusual quality is that it presents us with a series of essays whose positions have now been seriously qualified and questioned by the author himself. Most of the essays were written in the late 1960's and, looking back over them in 1975, Crews has become sceptical of many of his earlier assumptions. As the not entirely self-evident title of his book suggests, he has moved away from a commitment to any closed interpretive system, including psychoanalysis; in place of a system Crews now pledges his allegiance to reason and the empirical attitude.

This change of mind is worked out in a book that conveys the impression of being a somewhat disparate collection, particularly with the inclusion of three essays dealing with Crews's response to the political situation in the United States in the late 1960's. His discussions of the role of academics and the university in the face of the Vietnam war and student protest movements already have a dated quality. It is easy to sympathize with Crews's discomfort over the narrow focus that can rise in literary studies, and with his *attempt* to reveal the unstated assumptions of capitalist ideology that affect English studies, but his actual efforts at social analysis are unsatisfying. And, in his later (1975) preface, Crews expresses his own relief that literary critics did not take up his "call" to focus increasingly on the factors lying behind literature.

The prefaces that precede each essay have a rather disarming effect: Crews makes his own self-criticism and seems to undercut any objections we might make. But not entirely. Crews is, on the whole, fairly orthodox in his views of psychoanalysis, and his essays on Norman O. Brown and Wilhelm Reich provide the quickest way into understanding his position. Crews presents a good critique of both Brown and Reich, and he is particularly convincing in his rejection of Reichian therapy for its

autocratic model and for the real danger it presents that shattering the character armor will simply shatter the person. More generally, Crews rejects these two apocalyptic thinkers in the name of reason and the empirical attitude. He opposes Reich's efforts to put the orgasm in place of self-knowledge, and contends: "Reich has become the posthumous beneficiary of a widespread demoralization in our culture, a weakening of the once-axiomatic belief that conduct should be guided by reason" (155). In his defence of reason Crews's assessment of Reich is judicious, but he is not entirely fair to Brown, who makes it perfectly clear in the introduction to *Life Against Death* that he is not trying to be "right", but is daring to introduce some new possibilities. Crews criticizes Brown largely because he takes up the central point of Freud's later metapsychology, the Eros-Thanatos dualism. It is especially the hypothesis of the death instinct that orthodox psychoanalysis disclaims, and Crews, with his desire for "evidence", concurs. But this attitude involves a real splitting of Freud himself, who *was* speculative as well as empirical and scientific. Crews's outright repudiation of Brown's speculative inquiry shows him to be, to some extent, both cautious and curiously academic — which is ironic considering that his book is full of attacks on the academic mentality.

Crews's main claim on our attention, however, comes from his attempt to determine the validity of a psychoanalytical approach to literature. The difference between his opening and concluding essay charts the distance he has travelled in trying to answer this question. His opening essay is an early defence of psychoanalytic criticism. He makes his defence by responding to a series of possible objections to this approach, the first one being that psychoanalysis is not a science — but it is on this very point that Crews has now largely changed his mind. With many of the other objections — that psychoanalytic criticism is jargon-ridden, for example — Crews seems to be tackling a straw man, confronting mainly those problems which can be dealt with fairly easily. And when he does confront a more serious objection — that psychoanalytic criticism neglects form — he is forced to admit that the complaint does apply to psychoanalytic criticism as it is generally practiced but insists that this does not reveal an inherent limitation in the method itself. He may be right, but if a certain approach continually leads to the neglect of form it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that this failure is partly caused by the method. Crews's final, telling, point is that if we do not adopt psychoanalysis we will have to fall back on some eclectic homespun psychology, but this may not be as deleterious as he implies, particularly if one is committed to any of the forms of criticism he eschews which do not overtly focus on psychology.

The justification of any critical method lies with its practical usefulness, and Crews — also the author of *The Sins Of The Fathers*, a psychoanalytic reading of Hawthorne — offers us here as demonstration an essay on Conrad. The essay includes an explicit attack on academic critics, particularly moralists, who, Crews claims, ignore the mental turmoil in Conrad and focus on some uplifting sentiment. Crews, on the other hand, discovers in Conrad the feeling that "nautical duty and discipline and trial constitute a welcome respite from something more fearsome. In a word, that something is sexuality" (47). But Crews ignores the possibility that the mental turmoil in Conrad's work is a reflection of *moral* conflict and struggle, and

that what appeared fearsome to Conrad was a world where all moral positions were being undermined. One of the serious limitations of Crews's position is the totally negative and curiously passive view he has of the place of morality in art. He even claims that "a criticism that explicitly or implicitly reduces art to some combination of moral content and abstract form and genre conventions is literally an anaesthetic criticism. It insulates the critic and his readers from a threat of affective disturbance" (77). This implies an extraordinary deprecation of the place of the moral sense, and moral decision, in art and life.

Crews now acknowledges the possibility that his essay on Conrad may not have avoided the danger of biographical reductionism, and one can only agree. His reading does not leave one very sanguine about the advantages of psychoanalytic criticism. His methodology in interpreting *Heart of Darkness* is suspect since he implies that the plot can be approached as if it were a dream recounted to a psychoanalyst. What Marlow — the "dreamer" as Crews calls him — is preoccupied with is, of course, the primal scene. I must confess that I have some difficulty in distinguishing the reading Crews presents here, in all seriousness, from the superb parody of a primal scene interpretation he gives in *The Pooh Perplex*. My doubts about his interpretation are just reinforced by the insistent rhetoric he offers to support his argument: "I do not want to review the abundant evidence that this 'dream' is indeed the shaping force in 'Heart of Darkness'; this fact will prove if anything too apparent to an unprejudiced reader" (57). The text almost ceases to be an artistic expression and approaches becoming a "clinical document". With a great deal of elaboration Kurtz becomes "a vindictive reconstruction of Conrad's father" — vindictive because otherwise we would not possibly recognize him as Conrad's father. The harlequin recounts the events of his life and Crews assures us that "beyond question this is Conrad's own story" (194). Beyond question, of course.

Whatever doubts and objections we may have about Crews's handling of Conrad's story, in the final essay of the book, "Reductionism and its Discontents", he faces squarely the limitations of psychoanalytic criticism. Crews admits that even the partisan of this method "can never quite dispel the suspicion that psychoanalysis is, as its opponents have always said, inherently reductionistic" (166). He partly attempts to allay these doubts by proposing a distinction between the mere use of a reductive idea, which, he claims, affects all critical approaches, and falling into reductionism, the denial of all meanings but the reductive one being revealed. This distinction is both necessary and helpful, but Crews insists: "The fact remains, however, that the greater part of Freudian criticism is not just reductive, as it is bound to be, but reductionistic as well, and to a degree unmatched in any other school" (169). This is a damning admission but Crews now thinks that a certain reductionism follows from the root assumptions of Freudian metapsychology. Indeed, he contends that "to be a nonreductionist Freudian requires an extraordinary detachment from the very assumptions that allow one to perceive unconscious themes in the first place" (177). Crews examines how this narrowing affects even the work of Norman N. Holland, the most sophisticated, and committed, advocate of psychoanalytic criticism. Holland, in fact, has recently

changed his tactics, and, believing that all critics write projectively, is exploring an associative, essentially subjective criticism. But Crews has a wiser critical sense and firmly rejects the path of subjectivism, and reaffirms the critic's traditional aim of attempting to see the object as it really is.

If Crews finds that Holland has not solved the problem of reductionism, neither, he claims, has the recent psychoanalytic school of ego-psychology, nor the post-Kleinian British theorists of "object-relations". However, the position that Crews advances in the course of discussing these two groups is somewhat surprising. He expresses dissatisfaction with the ego-psychologists because they "are scarcely more prepared than Freud himself was to acknowledge the prospective (not regressive) and meaning-creating (not confessional) aspects of art" (173) and he praises the British theorists for fostering a "constructive" view of art. Crews seems to have reached a view of the function of art quite similar to that expressed by Carl Jung — whom Crews nonetheless dismisses completely. Perhaps the final end of Crews's struggle with the question of the usefulness of psychoanalysis will be to move totally out of the Freudian system, but, at the moment, though insisting on a reductive tendency in psychoanalysis, he contends that Freud "remains indispensable" within a clearly marked out territory. But Crews has seriously narrowed the territory within which psychoanalytic criticism is helpful, and he leaves it with severely chastened and diminished claims.

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*R.P. Bilan*

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*The Civilized Wilderness: Backgrounds to American Romantic Literature, 1817-1860.* By Edward Halsey Foster. New York: The Free Press, 1975. Pp. xx, 220. \$9.95.

This is a book about the effect on American Romantic literature of popular attitudes toward nature, landscape art, and architecture. While neither a monumental nor an especially stimulating addition to literary studies, it is helpful and informative.

Mr. Foster uses a three-part structure. In the first part, he notes the American passion for travelling and the importance of the Erie Canal in opening up landscapes for discovery by decorous and well-to-do explorers, discusses the meaning of the *beautiful*, the *picturesque*, and the *sublime* as aesthetic categories, and points out the contrasting values represented on the one hand by virgin wilderness and on the other by a landscape enriched by the past associations with "literature, legend, or history" so much desired by Hawthorne and James.

Since the spiritual and moral nature of America was widely thought to be emblematically expressed in the landscape, understanding the interests of American tourists throws light on the American identity and influences our interpretation of the literature of the Romantics. In the East, Niagara Falls and the Hudson River were central attractions for the traveller. When Foster deals with descriptions of the

lands in the American West, he brings out some interesting facts. For example, although the scenery was new, the descriptive terms chosen by writers were the same as for eastern and European landscapes: *beautiful*, *picturesque*, *sublime*. These terms served for the Rocky Mountains as well as for the Hudson and the Catskills. Foster contrasts Irving's conventionally eastern descriptions of western landscapes with the descriptions of Parkman, who looked for qualities more individualized, more particular to the West. But while Parkman was more original in his descriptions, he resembles others of his time who looked forward to the civilizing of the wilderness. Even without Foster's guidance, one immediately thinks of Bryant, whose poem "The Prairies" expresses the ambivalent view not only of the poet but also of many of his contemporaries: the wilderness is a vast and magnificent temple, but Bryant anticipates with satisfaction the advance of civilization. At the same time, Cooper and Irving were beginning to provide mythical and historical overtones for the unspoiled wilderness. An effort was underway to "incorporate the wilderness within civilization".

That effort is the subject of part two, the most substantial part of Mr. Foster's study. Romantic America sought to combine civilization and wilderness in real and spiritual landscapes. The artistic realization of this "optimum environment" is seen in both *Walden* and in Thomas Cole's painting *The Ox-Bow*. In architecture and natural setting, Jefferson's Monticello shows the two halves of the wilderness/civilization equation in opposition, though visually united by a landscape garden, while Robert Gilmore, Jr.'s Baltimore estate, Glen Ellen, blends the two halves. Foster's analysis of the variations on this theme cannot be adequately summarized here, comprising as it does such varied topics as the influence of landscape gardening on Poe, the architectural theories of Poe and Emerson, and the significance of the house and landscape at Walden Pond as a resolution of the tension between wilderness and civilization. A minor fault apparent in this section was the somewhat monotonous repetition of the basic but simple point that house and landscape can be seen as emblems of "the owner's artistic, aesthetic, domestic, and social nature".

Foster closes part two with a chapter on idealized domesticity. In contrast to experimental communities like Brook Farm, the self-sufficient family in a suburban setting was the supreme utopian scheme if judged by its widespread and enduring influence on American life and literature. What election was to a Calvinist, environment became to a Romantic. Paintings and domestic novels celebrated the Happy Family. Against this background, Foster examines Melville's *Pierre* and Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. His comments on the latter are scanty, and his claim that "Hawthorne had little good to say about domesticity in this book" is unconvincing. His case rests on the implicit identification of Hawthorne with the sympathetically conceived but neurotic character Clifford, who, in a short-lived flight from the gloomy Pyncheon mansion, exuberantly proclaims his philosophy to a stranger on a train. In context, few readers would take Clifford's remark about homes being "the greatest possible stumbling-blocks in the path of human happiness and improvement" to be a trustworthy view. As Foster says, Clifford's words are an "extensive indictment of domesticity", but

Clifford has in mind the Pyncheon house and the evils he has suffered there. Hawthorne hardly expects the reader to accept Clifford's generalization, founded as it is on such limited and personal evidence. Foster errs in putting more weight on the melancholy Clifford's indictment than on the rejuvenating betrothal of Phoebe and Holgrave, symbol of the restoration of harmonious domesticity to the Pyncheon and Maule households. Rather than offering a significant counterview to the commonplace sentiments of the domestic novel, and regardless of Hawthorne's enriching ambiguity, *The House of the Seven Gables* is in the mainstream of "idealized domesticity".

The book concludes with two chapters on "Social Realities: Conflicts between Rural Ideals and Urban Realities". The rural world might be a suitable setting for Utopia if one were free and white, but what if one were black and lived on a plantation? Locating the seat of bliss in the city, fugitive slave narratives "follow a pattern the reverse of *Walden*, *Moby-Dick*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*". Among other subjects treated in this section are defenses of the image of the southern plantation, criticism of the city, and attempts to make the city more rural. The effort to unite rural and domestic virtues with city life is, of course, another manifestation of Foster's central thesis. The last chapter concerns the literati, presenting another view of the rural setting enlightened by civilization as the genteel and cultivated friends of the arts hold summer gatherings in the Berkshires.

As Foster develops his general argument, many secondary matters are raised and examined. Some have been mentioned, and a few others should be noted: the influence of Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa on landscape gardening was important and extensive; in *Walden*, Thoreau parodies fashionable descriptions of landscape; Melville's *Pierre* may be interpreted against a background of idealized domesticity. There is also a moment of irony as we learn how N.P. Willis, promoter of paradises for the wealthy, ended up toiling in the city to maintain an elegant property that he was able to visit only occasionally and for brief periods. He exemplifies Thoreau's description of the man, who, when he "has got his house . . . may not be the richer but the poorer for it, and it be the house that has got him".

Foster's subject profits from visual illustration, and more plates would have been welcome. What has been included was well chosen, but the author might have added Cole's painting of *The Ox-Bow*, which provides a striking juxtaposition of civilization and the wilderness. The painting is described but is not reproduced.

Earlier it was said that part two is the strongest section of Foster's study, but this is not to say that the work is uneven. Throughout, Foster provides intelligent comparisons between pictorial art, architecture, landscape gardening, and literature. An excellent bibliography increases the usefulness of the book.

Though not to be classed as "essential reading", *The Civilized Wilderness* is recommended.

Dalhousie University

S.A. Cowan

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*One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker: The Crusading Years 1895-1956.* Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975. Pp. XIII, 298. \$15.00

Admirers of John Diefenbaker will hail this book as another grand performance by the "Old Chief"; skeptics will say that it brings to light little that is new about the

man. Yet both will agree that it contains some interesting new anecdotes told in the typical Diefenbaker manner. Making the mistake of "joshing" Charlotte Whitton shortly after he was widowed, he found himself romantically connected with her in a newspaper headline, probably on information supplied by Miss Whitton herself. Solicitously Mrs. St. Laurent took him aside and offered him this advice: "Don't ever marry Charlotte Whitton. You are too much alike to ever get along." On another occasion Diefenbaker is not averse to sacrificing accuracy for effect. The key to Social Credit monetary theory is the A plus B theorem, but in his hands it becomes the  $A+B=C$  theorem. This permits him to say jokingly that "in later years, A came to equal BC, when British Columbia joined Alberta's ranks" and elected a Social Credit government.

Many readers will regard these early memoirs as merely a prelude to the volumes to follow, and will try to find in them an explanation of the post-1956 Diefenbaker and his failure as prime minister. While it is essentially a mellow, nostalgic Diefenbaker who emerges from them, he none the less manifests the love-hate complex which seemed to dominate his relations with other politicians in later years. Certainly he makes no effort to conceal his admiration for those who always remained faithful to him, and his distaste for those who at any time sought to thwart his ambitions. Almost ludicrously, he describes the ever-loyal Gordon Churchill as "one of the most outstanding parliamentarians and authorities on the Rules of the House of Commons of the present century". Whatever merits Churchill may have had, mastery of parliamentary procedures was not one of them. Perhaps the chief villain of the book is James Garfield ("Jimmy") Gardiner who, it alleges, established "one of the most vicious political machines this country has ever seen", one specially designed for "the personal destruction of political opponents." John Diefenbaker fell before it in five provincial and federal elections before he managed to win the federal riding of Lake Centre in 1940. Thereafter, although Gardiner "Jimmymandered" the seat three times and did "everything that the mind of a machine politician could envisage", he could not keep his long-term opponent out of the Commons, and in 1958 Diefenbaker gave him his quietus.

Scattered throughout the book are references to the Warwicks of the Conservative party, the groups from Montreal and especially Toronto whose supposedly sinister manipulations were to become almost an obsession with Diefenbaker. Clearly he is preparing to show that he too would become the victim of the same shabby treatment that these groups accorded to Manion. Not surprisingly, then, he makes himself the champion of the party caucus, most of which never deserted him. Meighen, he argues, committed a disastrous error in 1926 by accepting Lord Byng's offer to form a government. His fault was to put greater confidence in an Ottawa publicist, Grattan O'Leary, than in "the combined experience and knowledge of the Conservative front-benchers of that day", Perley, Ryckman, Tolmie, Drayton, Manion and Stevens, all of whom said "no". Yet, strangely enough, at the leadership convention of 1956, when Diefenbaker faced the critical question of whether or not to have a French Canadian second his nomination, he also chose to rely on the advice of a non-caucus supporter, Paul Lafontaine.

Every now and then Diefenbaker takes pains to insist that, instead of being regarded as a maverick, he should be credited with helping to drag his party "kicking and screaming into the Twentieth Century". It shocked him to discover



how many Conservatives equated social services with socialism and regarded "the possession of wealth as a necessary preliminary to any sound conception of national interest". For all his admiration for Meighen's debating and oratorical talents, he remembered, almost with horror, fighting two elections under him and having to explain the unexplainable. Especially vivid in his mind was a meeting in Saskatoon's Third Avenue Methodist Church in 1926, at which Meighen, asked by an old man to explain his opposition to old age pensions, "took [him] apart . . . as only he could", alienating most of the audience in the process. With more than a little satisfaction he relates that, when the family allowances bill was first introduced in the Commons, he was the only member of the Conservative caucus not prepared to oppose the measure, and that, partly due to his efforts, all but one were persuaded to support it in the end.

John Diefenbaker does not need to argue his concern for ordinary folk — none would deny it. But was it enough simply to talk in terms of following the tradition of Shaftesbury, Disraeli, and John A. Macdonald, and let it go at that? Perhaps his lack of a coherent philosophy in these and other matters led to the unending series of makeshift expedients that characterized his government and constituted his greatest failing as a leader of Canada.

*Dalhousie University*

*J. Murray Beck*

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*Bear*. By Marian Engel. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976. Pp. 141. \$7.95.  
*The Glass Knight*. By David Helwig. Ottawa: Obeson Press, 1976. Pp. 190. Cloth \$8.95; paper \$4.50.

*Bear*, as most people know by now, is the story of a woman's love affair with a bear. But it's not altogether as simple as that. As far as characterization goes, the bear is the more interesting of the two. He is an old moth-eaten, rag-tag, tame bear, a bit like a dog, who lives in a shed at the back of the big old octagonal Cary house, deeded to a historical institute after the death of the last of the Carys, Colonel Cary (a woman whose first name is Colonel). Colonel Cary (cunningly changing her name in order to overcome a male-prejudiced entailment ruling) is the only one of the eccentric Cary pioneer stock who ever learned anything about life: she learned to skin a lynx. The Carys, like Byron, have always kept a pet bear — and Lou suggestively wonders what on earth Byron could have been doing with his. The present old bear is not exactly sad, or pathetic, or heroic either; although the mating of bear and woman is productive of a hero, according to the old stories. This bear just is. Some of the life has gone out of him, however, and when he retreats to the woods one expects that it may well be his final winter. The affair between Lou and her bear has a similar structure to that of many modern novelistic liaisons, in which the male ultimately just can't keep it up. Old bear manages only one erection in the course of the novel, and that one surprises him so much one almost expects him to try to smuggle it into town, like the gent in the plus-fours. Bear may have some deficiencies in this respect, but by god you oughta see the tongue on him. The fact that it is the bear's tongue that gets into the honey pot is not insignificant,

since the book — which is surprisingly delicate and delightful — is not really about sex with the bears at all, but about discovering ways of authentic speaking. Impregnated by the bear's tongue, Lou may not give birth to a hero, but she may well discover her own "voice".

By the end of the summer, bear has other things on his mind and Lou's honey pots are in vain. Not much of a story it turns out. The love affair is over, and Lou heads back to the city, a changed woman it seems. Nobody seems to ask what bear himself gets out of it. His not to reason why. Or, he also serves. He has made a change in the cardboard personality of Lou, however, and for the first time she breaks the rules of the institute and carries off a bit of plunder, amongst which is a signed and inscribed first edition of *Wacousta*. Why *Wacousta*? the story of the fraudulently disgraced officer who, disguised as an Indian, becomes the fiercest and bloodiest fighter in Pontiac's wars, all in order to wreak vengeance on his former fellow officer? How could that fit in? Richardson was a romantic, like Cary? Or simply that *Wacousta* has some romantic blood in it? Or, more likely, that *Wacousta* is about the breaking of conventional rules in the cause of love, and that Richardson, as rough and ready as he is as a writer, speaks in his own voice.

To the question, what is it all about? it is possible to suggest both a trivial and by now tedious answer, and one that is much more significant. Trivia first. Despite the fact that bear is so convincingly created that one can almost feel his matted fur and smell his morning stools, he does also seem intended to carry yet another mythological message. He is the spirit of the wilderness, at least what's left of it. He stands in for the Great Bear and his thirty-seven thousand virgins, and therefore for all bears in mythology. He is an allusion to Faulkner's Old Ben, and Engel's attitude to the encroachments of civilization on the wilderness is not unlike Faulkner's, and the Cary mansion can remind us either of the Compsons or Sutpen. Teddy Bears don't seem to come into it much, which is a shame. As far as significant use of mythology is concerned, James Roose-Evans's *Odd and the Great Bear* (Odd is a teddy-bear who encounters his archetype in *Ursus Major*) beats *Bear* paws down. To read *Bear* as yet another story of the need for us (Canadians) to get into touch with the wilderness is quickly to place it as nothing more than a neat (and sexier) version of, or footnote to *Surfacing*. It deserves a better fate than that.

Despite the potentially trivializing qualities of *Bear*, one is struck with the quality of the writing. It is a book so carefully crafted that one is hardly aware of the craftsmanship. It reads easily and unpretentiously:

She was still trying to find the snap of the elbow that would whip the motor to life when Homer veered around the point and drew up beside her. She looked at him in daylight. He had a shrewd face, round pink-framed plastic glasses, very false false teeth, little broken veins in his cheeks. He wore a green drill workman's cap and a red mackinaw. She liked him.

Homer's penis briefly replaces bear's tongue, to keep things on the windy side of bestiality. Throughout the book, one feels the quiet authenticity of Engel's writing,

as if that is what she were writing the book about. Lou, who reads a lot, at one point reads Trelawny's *Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author*. Although she finds him abusive and unfair, she concludes that, "Trelawny's good. He speaks in his own voice. He is unfair, but HE SPEAKS IN HIS OWN VOICE". Lou remarks that she has been searching for a voice, perhaps the wrong one, that of Cary: "She was still searching the house to find his voice. She had an awed feeling that Trelawny and the bear were speaking in Cary's voice." Cary seems to have had a hand in degrading the voice of the wild by co-opting it for his own ends. Lou frees the bear, and his tongue, from Cary's chains. When Lou herself attempts to go too far with the bear, encouraging him to mount her, the bear rakes his claws across her back. The real intercourse with the bear is a spiritual one, and the resulting birth is an ability to speak in one's own voice from one's own centre.

One can only do so much with mere voice, however. One needs story and characters. And it remains a weakness of modern fiction generally that writers in their pre-occupation with their search for a voice cannot create more than a single character at a time. David Helwig seems to be conscious of this problem in his novel *The Glass Knight*. It is the story of Robert, 40-year-old ineffectual and intellectual divorcee, working as editor for a university press, and Elizabeth, suffering still from frigidity brought on by an abortion. One of the many themes of the novel comes from Robert's favourite author, Freud:

I think the possibility must be considered that something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavourable to the achievement of absolute gratification.

Other themes include: drugs (undesirability of), history, space, Jansenism, FLQ, and the War Measures Act. Helwig's instinct is possibly right when it tells him that for a novel to work there must be some connection between the private drama of the characters' lives and the public epic of the society in which they live. Helwig's use of the War Measures Act seems a merely mechanical and gratuitous response to this fact, however. Robert is a fragile and perhaps quixotic knight (on the occasions when he is not being a sexual male chauvinist, etc.), who attempts briefly to broadcast his liberal and idealistic opposition to Trudeau's corrupting of democracy by invoking the War Measures Act. Robert may be right that this one act of Trudeau's is the watershed of the future. Whatever one might think of Trudeau's decision (or whatever the novel means us to think of it; it is not clear if one is meant to sympathize with the naive 40-year-old, or hold him in derision), the personal lives of the characters are simply not intimately related to this public event. Its meaning does not reflect theirs. One is rightly suspicious of novelists with a social or political message, because melodramatic public events provide an easy way out of the necessity for fully imagining the inside of a character and his manner of speech, or voice. The opening paragraph gives us Robert's "voice":

I am waiting. No, past waiting. I am almost past caring that I do not know where you are. It is daylight on a December morning. I am here, writing this to you [Elizabeth]. And somehow you are here or I could not write to you, talk to you. Have I discovered something or am I only in that state of tiredness when obvious things take on too much meaning, factitious resonance?

*It would not be better if things happened to men just as they wish. Is that profound or banal? I am past knowing. Maybe it is both.*

The pretentious awkwardness of this (and banality) is a deficit the novel never makes good. The objection that this is characterization is not good enough, since Robert's voice is the dominant voice of the novel. The point is not only that it is awkward, but that the awkwardness arises from an inability to make connections. Just as Elizabeth and Robert fail to connect, so too does Helwig fail to connect with the insides of either of his inventions. This is not to say that the novel is without interest. Many of the brief scenes are very good. There is one in which Robert sees a little girl in a museum putting her pink tongue (is there a Ph.D. thesis here on tongues as mythological motif in CanLit?) up against a glass tank of piranhas, and the piranhas dash against the glass trying to get to that edible flesh. This striking little vignette is memorable, and this suggests that Helwig's imagination is perhaps more attuned to poetic or short story situations than he may be willing to admit.

Helwig's failure here is a significant one, because it is a failure of voice. The romantic dilemma seems to be that the more one tunes one's own voice, the less one has of significance to say about the world of men and women (Engel). Alternatively, one turns one's attention to socially significant themes at the risk of one's particular voice (Helwig). Of the two alternatives, probably the voice telling us that there is a way to find a voice is preferable. Somewhere between the two, however, seems to be where the source of the novel lies.

*Dalhousie University*

*Alan Kennedy*

*George Eliot: The Emergent Self.* By Ruby V. Redinger. New York: Knopf, 1975. Pp. xi, 515, xxv. \$15.00.

Even after Gordon Haight's masterful and sympathetic biography, students of George Eliot have been left with the tantalizing question of how someone who at the age of 35 had never before written an imaginative work could have embarked on such a successful and vigorous career as a writer of fiction.

At least until very recently, most people have taken it for granted that credit for the 'transformation' of an unhappy girl of prodigious and uncontrolled passion into the successful and thoroughly controlled novelist familiar to so many readers should go largely to G.H. Lewes. After all, she had never written any fiction until she met Lewes. Nonetheless, since she was well over 30 when she met Lewes, it might be of interest to know whether anything about this so-called 'transformation' could be attributed to developments in the early life of the novelist.

Accordingly, it is with high hopes that we come to such a study as Professor Redinger's, the aim of which is to trace the influence of that early life on the novelist's subsequent career. Alas! although Redinger has clearly devoted very considerable effort to the study, we come away from the book feeling enervated and slightly soiled. So pervasively clinical is the aura with which Redinger surrounds

a novelist who after all antedated Freud by some 40 years, that we are apt to wonder whether it is really worth the trouble of plowing through the slough of internal despond presented to us as George Eliot's life to find out the things she has to say about that life.

For a psychologically-oriented critic, Redinger is curiously reserved on sexual matters. Otherwise, she is utterly grim, utterly relentless, and (what is worse) utterly humorless in tracing virtually everything about the author, from the genesis of her novels to her religious experiences, to the 'frustrations' of a lonely and loveless childhood, and to Eliot's attempts to recover from that childhood. Her method of procedure is made clear in the following passage:

An exploration of the causes of her long period of frustration and her release from it provides considerable insight into her career as a writer; it also illumines, as individuated in her, the unfolding self – its power and uncanny strategy, whether or not it leads, as in her instance, to the tangible production of genius.

Throughout, Redinger shows considerably more interest in the strategy than in the particular 'self' at hand. She bases her theories about Eliot not on any significant body of previously unpublished material concerning the author's childhood, but on her re-interpretation of what she admits to be the semi-fictionalized account of this childhood given in Cross' biography. Since Redinger herself admits that George Eliot's early life cannot be reconstructed "with more than problematic certainty" (5), it seems premature, to say the least, to base any theory of Eliot's creative development chiefly on that early life!

It is Redinger's contention that Eliot's early rejection, first by her parents, then by her brother Isaac, prevented what would otherwise have been an early talent for writing from blossoming until full adulthood. Her evidence in support of this contention is far from convincing; it consists of a single tale – and not a fully original tale at that, but a "re-creation", as we would call it, of Walter Scott's *Waverley*. The admittedly significant accomplishment of writing out from memory what she had read would suggest to us intelligence, surely, but not 'creativity', at least as most people would understand the term. Redinger's explanation seems more ingenious than convincing:

It is probable that the reproducing of the original from memory was a far more creative act than either the child-author or the surprised older spectators could have realized....There is little doubt that had she been psychically free to translate the visions of her own imagination into outward form, she would have been a natural writer from a very early age. (58-59)

The final sentence of this passage provides but a mild foretaste of the clinical reek which is to come. Evangelicalism was an 'outlet' for young Mary Ann Evans' passionate nature (70); her giving it up was "the inevitable reaction to having cast off the rigid bonds" (116-117) imposed on her creative energies under the guise of religious fervor. Her love for Lewes was useful in that it channeled her native

'aggressiveness' so that it was "free to emerge in a form unhampered by guilt feelings" (127). And her relationship to Lewes is seen as that of "A child reawaiting the return of the mother-brother who had once abandoned her" (286). Seldom is anything approaching concrete evidence offered in support of these bold, jargon-ridden assertions.

If Redinger's tendency to psychological generalization distorts her view of Eliot's life, it is fatal to her reading of the novels. She writes about *The Mill on the Floss*, for example, with the arrogance of one sure she knows more about the author's motivation than the author herself could ever have known:

It is improbable that George Eliot. . . was aware of either the surge of frustrated but hostile feeling for Isaac which had led her to study inundations or the great need for self-justification which was slowly plotting her story. (418)

Her comments on the other novels are often little less extreme. *Adam Bede* is seen as an attempt on Eliot's part to prove her father's manliness (36). Latimer's bitterness, in "The Lifted Veil", only partially conceals "the strong undertow of George Eliot's own fear and guilt" (403-404). The "curiously sadistic" portrait of Romola is viewed as "a means of self-flagellation for her creator" (454). Even *Silas Marner* is seen in terms of Isaac's early rejection of his sister, and as the product of a "not uncommon" childhood fantasy about "a destiny uncircumscribed by the known facts of an ordinary family background" (440). We can only suggest that such a statement could be made about virtually any fairy tale ever written; we are still no farther along the road to understanding the author.

Certainly Redinger's view of George Eliot's adolescence and young womanhood as one long writing block does little to explain the eventual emergence of the novelist. If such a block existed, when did it emerge? When the would-be author was perhaps ten or twelve years old? If so, what great works did this block cost us? Considering the great emotional depth as well as immense intellectual range of George Eliot's novels, it seems inconceivable that such works could have been produced by anyone under 30 years of age. To suggest that the author suffered from a childhood "writing block" because she was not turning out such works in her 'teens is about as appropriate as suggesting a "writing block" as the reason for Tolstoi's failure to have produced *War and Peace* by the age of 19! To be sure, in this age of psychological criticism, talk of "writer's block" is not new. But Redinger goes beyond most critics in claiming her subject to have suffered from this affliction before it could conceivably have occurred to her that she might become a writer of fiction.

Considering the range of Eliot's activities during the years of "artistic frustration", it is inconceivable that she could have had either the time or the energy to write fiction. What is remarkable is that she accomplished as much as she did. Her extremely busy life included activities as diverse as her editorial duties for the *Westminster*, the philosophical and religious studies which culminated in the monumental translations of Strauss and Feuerbach, and the supervision of the family dairy, at home. Had not a "writing block" intervened to prevent her from adding novel-writing to the above schedule of activities, she would doubtless have broken down from sheer physical exhaustion!

Redinger's response to the extraordinary achievement of a woman who somehow managed to acquire the education needed for such projects as the two translations, without benefit of the facilities of a university, is to suggest that Eliot felt the need to study intensively as a kind of "compensation" for her lack of love and for her failure to be a creative artist — a suggestion as absurd as it is insulting to her subject. To anyone who knows anything of Eliot's life, it is clear that hers was a mind of the most rigorous cast, a mind which could not ever have rested content until it had tested itself to the very utmost, and surveyed the full extent of its domain. The question of psychological "compensation" is totally beside the point. Such a person as Eliot would *never* have been "free" for creative art until she had completed the necessary mental travels. To see the early days of education and mental exploration, as Redinger does, simply as frustrated expressions of hostile feelings left over from childhood, is to miss their point entirely.

To be sure, the book does raise some useful points. Redinger is quite good on the "Strauss era" (141-148), recognizing this as the turning-point after which Eliot would insist on sympathy, rather than 'truth' in the intellectual sense, as the central criterion for judging experience. She is also quite perceptive in some of her comments about Cross' biography, and in her discussion of Eliot's relationship to her publishers, the Blackwoods. But even at its best, Redinger's book is never a labour of love. There is a sense of strain, a hint of the struggle needed to fit the subject to the theory, such as we never find in Haight. Far from supplanting the earlier biography, Redinger's work serves only to show how difficult it will be for anyone to move beyond it, at least in the foreseeable future.

*Dalhousie University*

*J. C. Peirce*

*Canadian Society in Historical Perspective.* By S.D. Clark. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976. Pp. vii, 144.

This little book although scarcely of the scope of Professor Clark's classic works on sect and religion in Canada and Canadian movements of social protest, nevertheless embraces much of the same approach. S.D. Clark is of the vintage when the study of society in Canada was pursued as an integrated whole, without clear distinctions between economics, politics and sociology, and the emphasis was upon employing history as a key to illuminating contemporary social situations. Professor Clark is fond of citing in this book the works of H.A. Innis, the great Canadian economist, *cum* political scientist and social historian as being exemplary of the best of this tradition of scholarship. This is a tradition which Clark has followed with dogged determination and relative obliviousness to the temptations of the broad range of theories and methodologies which have been displayed to the Canadian student of society for the last several years.

In the first essay in *Canadian Society in Historical Perspective* Professor Clark presents possibly his first reasoned defence of his particular genre of the practice of social investigation. The author offers a critique of functionalism, an orientation

which has formed the core of much contemporary social science activity. In criticizing functionalism for its lack of deference to historical fact, Clark asserts that "there is nothing about the [Canadian] society that can be fully understood except in relation to how the society developed." The same theme is reiterated in his second essay, "Group Interests in Canadian Politics", where Professor Clark states that the sociologist "has been too little a historian". Functionalism is dismissed as inadequate because of its concern for the *status quo*, and its tendency toward explanation only of the persistency of aspects of society. The failure of the theory to provide a guide to the understanding of processes of social change can only be remedied by an historical approach. Professor Clark's criticisms are not new; yet, they must be taken in the context of one who foresaw the central significance of social change to the understanding of a society before sociology became enamoured of the concept and built elaborate theories around it. It was through the traditional portals of historical research that this revelation came about; *plus ça change, plus ça mème*.

This book also contains examples of the current research interests of Professor Clark. He is presently concerned with the problems of rural migration and rural poverty; two essays in the work are devoted to this area, as well as one which is peripherally related for it discusses the position of the French-speaking population in northern industrial communities. Here again the manifest interest is with process and change. The essays are notable for their lucidity; the lay reader will be pleased with their almost total lack of jargon.

The same is true of the other essays in the book which deal with post-war Canadian society; these meld historical research with the particularly gifted insight of the author into Canadian society. Professor Clark brings to bear a presentiment about Canadian society which would possibly defy one who did not possess years of acquaintance with it. Clark's writing in these essays will possibly surprise readers who only have knowledge of his works dealing with the more remote past, for he handles with felicity the development of the expanded post-war middle class, the emergence of the counter-culture generation and so forth. Yet, Professor Clark is bound to displease many professional social scientists. There is a surprising absence of "hard data", the omnipresent statistic, the ultimate verification of truth for many contemporary students of society.

Having demonstrated the unique practice of historical sociology, S.D. Clark addresses himself to the *detournement* of this tradition in two essays, one of which is specifically concerned with the Americanization of Canadian sociology, and a second which seeks to trace the development of sociology in Canada. Professor Clark rejects the universalistic pretensions of contemporary American sociology as it is practised in English-speaking Canada, and contends that there must be a national content to the discipline of sociology. French-Canadian sociologists are cited as being exemplary for their preoccupation with their particular society. The fundamental difference between American and Canadian society is a vast one, argues author Clark; American society can be taken for granted in its existence, whereas such is not the case with Canada. The inference is that only a sociology interpenetrating with the society can give true recognition to the intrinsic



instinctiveness of Canadian society. Clark decries the failure of official organs of cultural identity such as the Canada Council to assist in the creation of a nationalistic discipline of sociology, and registers strong protest to the dominance in the practice of sociology of American models and empirical material. "No Uganda-type" expulsion of American teachers of sociology in Canada is advocated. The vehemence of tone, however, is mitigated by Clark's noting that he values too highly the friendship of colleagues of American origin to make war upon them, and that he is aware of the role which many of these have played in meeting the serious personnel shortages in Canadian departments of sociology. The author realizes that his views may elicit charges of "nationalism, or worse still, racism".

The strident notes of these two chapters convert *Canadian Society in Historical Perspective* from a non-provocative, dispassionate work into a document which is likely to elicit the most intense sentiments in the relatively small community of Canadian social scientists. The work may be viewed as a testament to the frustration of a particular scholar who has found his approach to the study of society overwhelmed by an abundance of alien philosophies. Yet, this personalization of the book must be balanced by a realization of the very real merit of many aspects of Professor Clark's practice of the study of Canadian society. It is too late to speculate as does Professor Clark that sociology in Canada needed a Harold A. Innis to provide a corner stone for the development of a distinctive Canadian discipline, and to foster the historical approach to the study of sociology. We must content ourselves with the fact that with presently non-expanding university staffs, the existing generation of tenured faculty will be able to have a continuing influence for many years to come. It is only to be hoped that when S.D. Clark passes from academia that he will leave behind a few disciples from his long and productive years of scholarship to serve as a reminder that there are other approaches to the study of Canadian society than those currently in vogue.

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David J. Bellamy

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*Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction.* By Fred Kaplan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975. Pp. xvi + 250. \$10.00.

Near the end of *Dickens and Mesmerism*, Fred Kaplan states his main theme:

In his exposure to mesmerism early in his career and his continued belief in the reality of the phenomenon all his life, Dickens became, not a mesmerist, and certainly not a scientific mesmerist, though he often admired and hoped for the success of their work, but a novelist who could use the mermerists' [sic] emphasis on will, energy, and mind as intensified metaphors for his exploration of the condition of man. (p.234)

In his study, Kaplan first establishes the historic beginnings of mesmerism, especially in England, then reviews Dickens' involvement with the movement, and

finally discusses the ways in which animal magnetism influenced Dickens' fiction. The book thus moves from fact to theory, from scholarship to speculation. In both respects it contributes substantially to our understanding of Dickens.

The work opens with an account of the early history of mesmerism and its first great English champion John Elliotson, senior physician and Professor of the Principles and Practice of Medicine at the University of London. Kaplan describes a number of early experiments and public exhibitions Elliotson held with the O'key sisters (and others), many of which Dickens attended. Kaplan's scholarship is impressive. He discusses Mesmer's pioneering study, "Sur La Découverte Du Magnétisme Animal" (1779), traces the early history of the movement in England from about 1790, and cites frequently from two contemporary medical journals — *The Lancet* and Elliotson's own publication, *The Zoist*. The footnotes in his first chapter form a veritable short title catalogue of the history of mesmerism in England and France.

Kaplan offers several theories to explain why Dickens became involved with "the mesmeric mania". As a public phenomenon — full of spectacle and scandal — hypnotism fascinated everyone in the 1830s, including Dickens who, after all, "had his fingers to the pulse of all the fashionable obsessions of the last years of that decade" (p.3). The utopian belief devoutly held by both Mesmer and Elliotson — that mesmerism would heal the world of all psychic and physiological disorders — attracted Dickens but "unlike Elliotson, Dickens was intensely suspicious of the results of man's attempt to control natural forces within the environment and within himself" (p.234). However mesmerism did appeal to Dickens in a more personal, if unrecognized, way. Kaplan explains that animal magnetism depends on a special relationship between operator and subject. The key to that relationship is the power of the operator to dominate and exercise his will over the passive subject (who was often female). Dickens exercised this same kind of power over his wife, his children, his friends, and — in a special sense — over his fictions. Thus mesmerism represented a fundamental truth about Dickens' own psyche that he probably never fully realized. Significantly, as Kaplan notes, Dickens always practiced mesmerism but never allowed himself to be practiced upon — he was always the operator, never a subject.

Dickens' encounters with mesmerism opened him up "to new experiences and theories about personality, will, dominance, and control, the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious, reality and dreams, the visible and the invisible, mechanistic science and transcendent [sic] forces" (p.72). In Chapter IV, Kaplan develops the ways in which this new pseudo-science affected the man in both his life and his work by offering a detailed history of the strange — and ultimately strained — relationship between the Dickenses and the de la Rues. Although Edgar Johnson (*Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and His Triumph* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952], pp. 541 ff.) has also considered this episode, Kaplan's version is more complete, more grounded in the truth about mesmerism — and utterly fascinating. One amazing incident involves Dickens and Catherine after they have temporarily left the de la Rues in Genoa. Dickens had agreed to concentrate on Madame de la Rue each morning for an hour — a kind of long-distance, one-way transmission of magnetic waves:

On the road to La Scala Dickens sat within the carriage, not on top, as was his usual custom. Instead, Mrs. Dickens had "been hoisted up" for the fresh air. Dickens paid no attention to her, remaining absolutely still and concentrating his entire being with absolute and unwavering intensity on mesmerizing "our patient." No one could possibly know what he was doing, particularly Catherine. Would anyone believe that after about five or ten minutes he was startled to hear Catherine's muff fall and that when he looked up at her he found her "in the mesmeric trance, with her eyelids quivering in a convulsive manner peculiar to some people in that state." (p.83)

Such, apparently, was the power of Dickens' will.

That Dickens was greatly influenced by mesmerism is made clear in the five remaining chapters of the book. Kaplan cites the wealth of explicit references to mesmeric stares, touches, dreams — from Nicholas Nickleby's "magnetic slumber" (p.146) to James Carker's hypnotic teeth (p.198) and John Jasper's frightening "dream state" (pp.223-24). His emphasis is on how Dickens uses mesmerism in his fiction, and he offers some new and worthwhile readings. Kaplan helps explain the scene in *David Copperfield*, for example, in which Rosa Dartle attempts to seduce Steerforth by her singing and playing. Her anguish at failing is that "of someone who has used her maximum force of will (so strong that David, not its object, has been affected), and found her subject impervious. Such a fundamental rejection suggests Steerforth's rejection of belief in vital power in the universe at large and makes it possible for him to maintain a cold cruelty on the surface level of ego and charm alone" (p.148). Elsewhere, Kaplan notes that the special relationship between "the older man and the young boy . . . sometimes vibrates with the latent sexual implications of dominance and control, of operator and subject" (p.197). He discusses the Headstone-Lizzie-Wrayburn triangle in *Our Mutual Friend* and is full of insights about both the characters and the novelist who created them. Much of Kaplan's last chapter should serve as a corrective to those who believe Dickens has no affinities with the Romantics. As Kaplan states, Dickens "embraced simultaneously the Romantic variant of the metaphor of man that emphasized intuition, spontaneity, man as God, the role of mystery and magic in the cosmos, and the Victorian variant that, as the century advanced, more and more emphasized order, social norms, centralized reform, progress, and science" (p.232). Dickens, it seems, was a Romantic Victorian after all.

Still, there are some problems with the study. Kaplan has organized his discussion of Dickens' fiction on a thematic basis, adopting such headings as "The Discovery of Self", "The Past Illumined", and "The Sexuality of Power". The themes are central ones — but too often in reading these chapters one tends to feel that the book becomes a simple catalogue of mesmeric references. Kaplan usually lists three characters from different novels in one paragraph to illustrate a particular idea. But such rapid scanning does not permit coherent readings of the novels. Dickens' works are reduced to examples; often the same example is mentioned several times. Repetition may be inescapable in a book of this kind, but Kaplan is much more successful in organizing his material when he focuses on novels in a more sustained way.

Sometimes Kaplan defines mesmerism so loosely that it can be read into almost any scene. Obviously mirrors — which reflect the self and often reveal hidden truth — have some relationship with mesmerism. So does the use of hands. But to consider them only in this context limits their metaphoric power. At times Kaplan himself seems hypnotized by his subject; when he notes that “Mrs. Lammle discovers that the recently wealthy Bella Wilfer ‘had a fascinating influence over her’” (p.176) and considers such usage as deriving from the mesmeric, he is surely overstating his case. Does this mean that Sam Weller mesmerizes Mary, and that Florence Dombey magnetized Edith?

My major criticism, however, is that Kaplan fails to set his book in an adequate critical context. The first half is original scholarship — although even here there is some debt to Edgar Johnson. But the interpretive criticism that follows after Chapter IV could well have been strengthened by an awareness of what other Dickensians have done. Kaplan’s discussion of the double fails to cite Lauriat Lane’s important essay, “Dickens and the Double”, *The Dickensian*, 55 (1959), 47-55. His discussion of the sexual relationship between Quilp and Nell may not have been able to profit from Garrett Stewart’s recent *Dickens and the Trials of the Imagination* (Harvard: Harvard U. Press, 1974), esp. pp. 90-92, 97-99, but it should have been aware of Pamela Hansford Johnson’s “The Sexual Life in Dickens’s Novels” in Michael Slater’s *Dickens 1970: Centenary Essays* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1970), pp. 173-94, esp. pp. 176-79. Certainly his discussion of *Edwin Drood* owes a good deal to Edmund Wilson’s “The Two Scrooges” (in *The Wound and the Bow*) and his ideas about mirrors could have been amplified by J. Hillis Miller’s observations in *The Form of Victorian Fiction* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 36-44. The list could be greatly expanded.

Apparently Kaplan felt that his work did not need such buttressing; he clearly is able to read the fiction on his own terms. But his lack of critical awareness isolates his work; his book stands alone so that we don’t know where he is indebted to former critics and where he is off on his own. Perhaps this critical isolation is what contributes to the two errors. The first — a nitpicking one — finds Kaplan referring to “David Copperfield and Em’ly Peggotty” (p.127, and index). But Little Emily is the daughter of Mr. Peggotty’s brother-in-law Tom — and her last name is never specified. Peggotty adopts her but she is never referred to as Em’ly Peggotty. A more serious error occurs when Kaplan talks about Charles Darnay looking into a mirror, muttering to himself, and feeling “alienated” (p.114). But in the context of *A Tale of Two Cities* it is clear that Sidney Carton is being described — not Charles Darnay. It is Darnay who leaves, and Carton who is “left alone”, muttering half-drunken speeches to himself (Book II, Ch. 4). Such a misreading — to use current political jargon — undercuts Kaplan’s credibility.

Even with its problems, however, *Dickens and Mesmerism* remains a useful and intelligent book. Few critical works on Dickens have taken as much care to place their subject in historical perspective. We may never be able to completely understand Dickens’ creative consciousness, but thanks to Fred Kaplan we possess a firmer sense of how it worked. Kaplan succeeds in showing us some of “The Hidden Springs of Fiction”.

University of Iowa

Charles I. Schuster

*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Volume XI, 1848-1851.* Edited by A.W. Plumstead and William H. Gilman. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975. Pp. xxv, 586. \$35.00.

Volume eleven of Emerson's *Journals* covers the years subsequent to his return from his second visit to Europe (1847-48). It includes more ruminations on the figures he chose for *Representative Men* (1850) and additional reactions to the English character (see volume ten). These eventually went into *English Traits*. The volume also contains the notebook in which he made preparations for his share of the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (1852). Perhaps the most interesting features of this volume, however, are Emerson's opinions of the Fugitive Slave Law and Daniel Webster, its most celebrated defender in New England.

Emerson's comments on Swedenborg in his journals belie the even tempered remarks to be found in his essay in *Representative Men*. He sees Swedenborg, like Newton, "entangled with Calvinism". "All the science of England & France is," he writes. Such an observation would have caused Blake to cheer. Continuing in this vein, he characterizes Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love* as being to the "Goody-Two-Shoes taste", and he wonders, "What to do with the stupendous old prig?" He compares Swedenborg unfavourably to Boehme: "Behmen is healthily & beautifully wise, notwithstanding the mystical narrowness & incommunicableness. Swedenborg is disagreeably wise, and for all his worlds I would not be he." There are many such comments on Swedenborg in the various journals in volume eleven, and the reader cannot help but wonder why Emerson chose him to represent the mystic or, even, chose him at all. Of course, the reason for his choice may well have been practical. Swedenborg was still a popular figure in 1850 and the Swedenborgian churches provided a captured audience. Furthermore, much that was needed to write an essay about him was easily at hand.

Emerson's comments on the English are equally penetrating, if not as caustic: "An Englishman's adjective of climax is 'so English,' and, when he wishes to pay you the highest compliment, he says, I should not know you from an Englishman." He saves his most withering remarks for the French, and the following examples make this reader think of Mark Twain. "I suppose," he writes with perhaps some irony, "all the Saxon race at this day, Germans, English, Americans, all to a man regard it as an unspeakable misfortune to be born a Frenchman." "If I had a barn-fowl that wanted a name, I should call him *France*. Never was national symbol so commically fit." And, "The French proclamations are hysterical." "Perhaps," he writes in another journal included in volume eleven, "the French Revolution of 1848 was not worth the trees it cut down on the Boulevards of Paris." These views should be contrasted with reactions to Paris recorded in other journals (see volume ten).

Emerson's heartfelt response to Margaret Fuller's death and his interesting observations on rural America, which he recorded in a journal he kept on lecture trips to the West, make volume eleven absorbing, but the striking force of his vitriolic comments on Daniel Webster and the Fugitive Slave Law make it a delight.

"What a moment was lost," he observes, "when Judge [Lemuel] Shaw declined to affirm the unconstitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Law!" In retrospect, the historical ironies of such a remark are overpowering. The time is April 1851. Herman Melville is struggling away in western Massachusetts and in June is to write to Hawthorne in nearby Lenox that he is soon to leave for New York to drive his whale through the press. Meanwhile, his father-in-law, enraging Emerson in eastern Massachusetts, denies habeas corpus to a fugitive slave, who was returned soon after to slavery. Did Melville share Emerson's view of the Fugitive Slave Law? There is evidence that he did. Is Webster Ahab, as some critics have suggested? Emerson would have nominated him for a far less flattering role. In fact, while berating Webster he also bewails the loss the nation has suffered in the deaths of old time fighters for freedom and liberty: "[John] Quincy Adams is at last still" and "Thomas Melville [Herman's grandfather] is gone." How Melville would have savored the reference to cannibalism in Emerson's comment, "What Mr. Webster has now done is not only to re-enact the old law, but to give it force, which it never had before, or to bring down the free & Christian state of Massachusetts to the cannibal level." Emerson minces no words, "I opened a paper today in which he [Webster] pounds on old strings in a letter to the Washington Birth Day feasters at N.Y. 'Liberty! liberty!' Pho! Let Mr. Webster for decency's sake shut his lips once & forever on this word. The word *liberty* in the mouth of Mr. Webster sounds like the word *love* in the mouth of a courtesan." There can be no doubt where Emerson stood in 1851, since much that he recorded in his journals found its way into the Fugitive Slave Law essay he published the same year.

Volume eleven is forever interesting and, like its predecessors, well-edited. It is dedicated fittingly to the late Alfred R. Ferguson, one of the three original founding editors.

*University of Alberta*

*E.J. Rose*

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*Christian Theology and Old English Poetry.* By James H. Wilson. Mouton: The Hague, Paris, 1974. Pp. 196. 38 Dutch Guilders.

In this volume, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *Exodus* and *Christ* are studied in terms of the relationship between theme and some principal imagic patterns. Selected images of the exiled figure, the sea journey, treasure, ship and lock and key are examined and interpreted as they appear in various clusters in each of the poems in turn. The interpretation is carried out following the "panallegorical" principles expounded by Robertson and Huppe, and the exposition focusses upon the condition of the pilgrim-exile, who has entered through his baptism into the "treasure" or grace of God and who is thereby warned from the delusory felicity of this world, but who is also thereby "locked into" the rigours of a harsh ministry in this world and given a bitter sense of his being "locked out" of the promise that was his before Adam's fall, the promise which will be again unlocked only by Christ at the Day of Judgment, when the "sea-farers" of this life will be freed from their trial and the damned locked in permanent exile.

In considering the similarity of tone that marks these poems, Wilson concludes that "the influence is not so much that of poems or poets upon each other as that of the entire medieval background of patristic writings and exegesis upon the Old English poetic tradition in its entirety" (p.165), and he assumes throughout his study that "the allegorical method of reading and teaching was tantamount to a way of life" for the audience of these poems, so that they would have been sensitive to the "theological overtones" of the images and situations portrayed (p.69). This approach grows out of the Robertsonian historical criticism "which seeks to reconstruct the intellectual attitudes and the cultural ideals of a period in order to reach a fuller understanding of its literature" (Robertson, cited p.56), and it is determinately allegorical. Furthermore, Wilson stresses a predominantly monastic influence in the composition of the poems and argues that the Augustinian principles of interpretive reading and allegorical composition conditioned the writing of this new imaginative literature, which leads him to read the texts as allegories which were "more an appeal to reason than to the senses", and to see the allegory as very conscious and systematic "since reasonable thought was so exclusively defined by its adherence to established doctrine" (p.84).

As a result, the didactic possibilities of the poems are stressed while their aesthetic strengths are correspondingly underemphasized in an over-reaction to those scholars who "discount the existence of allegory or symbolism as a method in medieval poetry" (p.84). Emphasis upon the poets' rational craft in advancing their themes conflicts with a sufficient appreciation of the poems' lyric and dramatic power, and an unnecessary dichotomy between the literal and allegorical functions of the poems is maintained, a dichotomy which might be resolved by a more sensitive figural (or typological) analysis.

Nonetheless, the shaping influence of Continental Latin writings of the third to sixth centuries upon the types of Christian literature which appears in the Old English poetry of the seventh to ninth centuries is clearly presented in two initial chapters which consider the background of the *peregrinus* tradition and its realization in the Celtic missionary church, the growth of the monastic schools in Britain, the rise of Christian genres of imaginative literature and Old Testament influence upon the epic element in Old English elegiac poetry, two chapters in which Wilson argues convincingly that Old English poetry is part of "the continuous tradition of Christian literature" developing out of Latin literature. Thereafter, in the individual studies of the poems, Wilson sensibly explores such themes as those of exile and the gradual decay of the material world, the first with its distinction between sorrowing *peregrini* exiled in this world (the *anhaga*, *saemen*, *sundbuende*) and "landsmen" (the *eorthbuende*) who find felicity in the world, the second with its distinction between the captivity of "city-dwellers" or wretched earth-dwellers (*burgsittende*, *earme eorthware*) and the freedom of the anagogical Holy City (*seo halga byrg*) or eternal imprisonment of Satan's keep (*se feonda byrig*). Noting for example, the repeated designation of the Israelites in their Exodus as sailors (*saemen*, *flota*, *saewicingas* opposing the loathed Egyptian *landmanna*) and the apparent designation of their desert path as they follow God's pillars as a *flodwege*, he stresses the clearly allegorical quality of the nautical imagery of *Exodus* and argues that the comparable use of the images in the elegies

implies a like Christian theme and purpose. Though questionable at points (e.g., in *Christ* 1.337, the *burgsittende* surely are not identifiable with the "earthdwellers" as opposed to the "seamen" who have "committed their lives to the Christian ideal of the hard mortal lot," but are rather those mortals who see the world as a vale of death, *deathdene*, and who aspire to the blessed kingdom or *faeder rice*), this exposition is generally persuasive and leaves one with a clear conception of the poem's structures, thematic concerns and "religious impact".

Thus, Wilson carefully substantiates his thesis concerning both the place of these poems in a continuous Christian literary tradition and their having an allegorical nature, although his readings are qualified by an unduly determinate view of that allegory and a stress upon rational structure which, some will argue, to some degree reduces the poems' more powerful symbols to ecclesiastical metaphors.

Dalhousie University

H.E. Morgan

*Selected Poems*. By Margaret Atwood. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976. Pp. 240. \$6.95.

In a period of ten years (1966-76), Margaret Atwood has published three novels, a critical book and six volumes of poetry. *Selected Poems*, by now a necessity in view of this large body of work, provides a good survey of the poetry, with a slightly heavier concentration on the last two volumes *Power Politics* and *You Are Happy* (no new poems are included). Atwood appears to have made the selection herself, and there is no introduction or editorial comment, understandable from a poet who has remarked that she would prefer to leave the task of criticising her poetry to others, the process preferably to take place after she is dead, "if at all". She even omits the "Afterword" she wrote for the original edition of *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*.

The poems, however, need little assistance. Atwood is peculiarly sensitive to contemporary psychological attitudes, and she captures them with such economy and precision that she has succeeded in reaching an audience that does not normally read poetry. Oxford University Press reports that in Canada she outsells all the poets on their list.

Atwood's "underground", the central metaphor for her work, precisely suits the urban, secular, and inward-looking individual in our society who finds it difficult to either connect himself with other people (much less to love them) or to his natural surroundings, but who continues trying. His efforts, defeats and withdrawals are seen in terms of an underground world which is dangerous and primitive, but also alluring because it lacks hypocritical defences. Contact and understanding can occur only on this territory, but the individual encounters and, in fact, builds complicated barriers to this area of consciousness. Exploration of this world is man's most worthwhile activity, though his successful penetration of it may bring only fleeting satisfaction.



Atwood introduced her underground in *The Circle Game* (1966), where it appears as the "place of absolute unformed beginning" that is the object of the flight west in "Migration: C.P.R.". We have partial reports of the underground in "A Place: Fragments", "Pre-Amphibian" and "Journey to the Interior" where it is described as a place lacking reliable charts where one can easily lose his way. Words are "pointless" here. In "A Fortification" from *The Animals in That Country* (1968), Atwood views sleep as contact with the "lost forest of being vulnerable" and suggests that the individual re-arms himself on waking to protect himself from "leaves and blood". "I Was Reading a Scientific Article" explores this mental world "crowded with radiant suns", and Captain Cook acknowledges a "mistake" in perusing maps rather than the "new land cleaned of geographies". The underground can also be a perception about a past state of consciousness which is so sharply focussed that it co-exists with the present moment. The two times create a single moment of truth. Many of the poems from *Procedures for Underground* examine this experience, e.g., "Game After Supper", "Girl and Horse, 1928", "A Morning", "A Soul, Geologically", "Woman Skating", "Buffalo in Compound: Alberta", etc. In the last lines of "This is a Photograph of Me" (*The Circle Game*) the poet even offers the reader a method for stimulating the imagination into a search for the truth of the underground. The flow of time in this world is not linear — perception rather than event is important, and degrees of awareness structure the time sense, e.g., "After the Flood, We".

It seems almost inevitable that Atwood would have become interested in the pioneering experience. Man in "unstructured space" as she describes the primitive landscape in "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" will either devise techniques for survival or wind up letting in the "green vision". Her pioneer does not learn to stock his "log houseboat with all the animals" and becomes a victim of nature. Even the "new land" that Captain Cook missed had its menacing side, a "beach gleaming with arrows". One can gain "wisdom and great power" from the underground, but only "if you can descend and return safely".

*The Journals of Susanna Moodie* appeared in 1970, and Atwood remarked in the "Afterword" that it was not Mrs. Moodie's conscious voice, but "the other voice" that had impressed her. Of the three journals, it is the first that captures the "other voice" best. Like the pioneer, Mrs. Moodie feels alien in "this space" and hears "malice in the trees' whispers", but unlike him, she allows the animals to "inhabit" her eventually, though her departure from the bush drives them out, and she comes away "not having learned". Journal I and the dreams of Journal II include some of Atwood's finest work. The tone falters in poems like "The Double Voice" and "Later in Belleville: Career" where phrases like "uplifting verse", and "There is no use for art" seem inauthentic or forced. Fortunately all the journals have been included. Atwood's intuitions about Mrs. Moodie's second voice (e.g., in "Night Bear Which Frightened Cattle") are so sensitive that the reader of the poet can safely dispense with Mrs. Moodie's critics.

With the publication of *Power Politics* (1971), Atwood appeared to the women's movement to have finally taken out a party card, but this was a rather narrow judgment. Atwood reserves the final ironies for herself ("You asked for love/I gave

you only descriptions/Please die I said/so I can write about it"). She points out to her lover, "You attempt merely power/you accomplish merely suffering", but she also sees that the succoring world a woman can create substitutes "one enemy" for "many". In this world love becomes a "mistake" for which both lovers are equally responsible: "Next time we commit/love, we ought to/choose in advance what to kill". Her lovers "are hard on each other/and call it honesty"; they attack each other equipped with love become weaponry. But Atwood has explored the underground herself. She knows that "A truth should exist,/it should not be used/like this". The circle game is truth of a sort, but beyond truth is tenacity: "of those/dwarf trees & mosses,/hooked into straight rock/believing the sun's lies & thus/refuting gravity".

The group of love poems entitled "There is Only One of Everything" which concludes *You Are Happy* are even more measured and mature. These begin in the *Selected Poems* with "IS/NOT", a poem about tenacity. The lovers, stuck "on this side of the border/in this country of thumbed streets and stale buildings...where love occurs in its pure form only/on the cheaper of the souvenirs", may not get "anywhere or anything", but must "keep going", fighting their way "not out but through". In "Eating Fire" her lover has learned to be the tenacious sun (brilliant on the cover of the original edition), "to be consumed and rise/intact, over and over". There are no longer any "tricks with mirrors"; these lovers have moved "beyond the mirror's edge". The hands of the "man on fire" are "open and held out, not empty, giving", and the woman can freely say, as in "There is Only One of Everything", "I want this. I want/this". Wholeness may never occur again in the same way, if at all ("The table/and freak plates glow softly, consuming themselves"), but at least at the moment "the shrill voices/that cried *Need Need*" have been stilled, and it is the crickets saying "*Ripe Ripe*" that the lovers hear. These seven poems (the additional two in the original deal with evasions of love) are among the finest Atwood has written, especially "Late August" and "Book of Ancestors". *You Are Happy* also included the rather awkward "Songs of the Transformed" spoken by non-human narrators, e.g., a rat whose only "want is love, you stupid/humanist" and worms which appear at night "only to love". Man continues to deny his connection with nature, but this denial is more successfully handled in poems like "Cyclops" and "Dreams of the Animals" when the poet is the narrative voice.

The *Selected Poems* excludes some strident poetry, e.g., "He is a strange biological phenomenon" from *Power Politics*, but some interesting poems, e.g., "Attitudes towards the mainland" appear to be missing to avoid a repetition of thematic material ("Roominghouse, Winter" is similar). "The Landlady", a subject both comic and frightening, is better handled in *The Edible Woman*, and might have made room for "Uncle M."; "the faint scrape of his trowel" seems more provocative than the "raw voice" of the landlady. Writers tend to favour their most recent work, the case here, but the imbalance is slight (after all, all of the Moodie journals are included), and the selection indicates that the poet can be dispassionate on her own behalf.

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*The Poet's Calling.* By Robin Skelton. London and New York: Heinemann and Barnes & Noble, 1975. Pp. x, 214.

According to Mr. Skelton, poets cannot enter into serious discussions about poetry because poets cannot express the mystery of poetry and because poetry can be explained only in poetry (p.192). Mr. Skelton says he is a poet: consequently, the reader might wonder why Mr. Skelton attempted to write about the poet's calling. But there are reasons why Mr. Skelton must be excused from any seeming inconsistency in writing a book on poetry: the book is not serious, Mr. Skelton does not demonstrate poetic sensibility, and his subject is only ostensibly about poetry.

Claiming, without sufficient grounds, that books on poetry are either too theoretical or too autobiographical, Skelton attempts to concentrate on the discipline that commitment to poetic inspiration entails and on the special difficulties that poets experience in society. But his book is both superficially theoretical and sketchily autobiographical. Although he often disclaims that poets are different, he clearly considers 'poethood' the most inclusive and spiritual way of being. Indeed, the tone in which he describes inspiration, intuition, solitude, precognition, and word-magic is pseudo-religious. Furthermore, a continuous discrepancy between statement and tone illustrates the unconsidered nature of Skelton's assumptions. His ideas about poetry are unduly exclusive; they are not held eclectically. Hence, pretending to attack academics for teaching poetry without love, he vents his spleen because academics do not reverence poets automatically. He claims to teach poetry with love, yet his pejorative and condescending remarks about the 'orthodoxies of the herd' and about 'folk' not as sensitive as poets express contempt for humanity. While describing a model for the learning of poets that is sheer dilettantism, a model that is supposed to support his claim that poets have to be more scholarly than scholars, he is brazen enough to scorn the popular prizing of poetry as emotion recorded in memorable words. Again, he pretends to accept the unrewardedness of poetry, but is unintelligently nostalgic: he implicitly maintains that poets are owed an audience. His generalizations about literary history, banal and oversimplified as they are, disregard consideration that great poets create their own audience by responding fully to the surface and the depth of contemporary life. Indeed, Mr. Skelton's generalizations about literary history are just about as helpful as his confusion between impressionism and intuition in his description of the poet's need to be independent of human contact and material reality. Undoubtedly, Skelton's assumptions about poetry are not refreshingly eclectic. He never entertains the thought that the poet is maker, that the poet is poet only as long as he composes, and that the writing of good poetry occurs only when a poet sees his making as one role among others.

This book does not serve the cause of poetry. Facile and inconsequential, it will arouse discussion not about the poetic vocation, for it lacks topical clarity, possesses little coherent argument, presents discrepant testaments about poetry without providing an informative synthesis of them, betrays a feeble sense of language, and undermines itself consistently with its uncontrolled tone. The main

discussion the book will prompt will concern why publishers print such unconsidered nonsense.

The book lacks topical clarity partly because Mr. Skelton is an egotist. Its first paragraph proves this. The eight first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives evidence a redundant and obtrusive self-reference which recurs throughout the book. Mr. Skelton's merely personal concern to defeat academic preoccupations is more pervasive, if not more accurate, than his examination of the demands of poetry on the poet. Topical clarity is also lacking because of non-incremental repetitiveness. The focus in the chapter on modern poetic modes is spoiled by erratic comments on the relation of form and content. Not only is description of the kinds thereby made cursory and fragmentary, but also Mr. Skelton fails to distinguish between the demands a poet places upon himself regarding apprehension of technique and the demands he places on the reader's recognition of technique in a poem.

The book's argument is weak because critical terminology is applied unself-consciously and premises are untrustworthy. When, for example, Mr. Skelton brands psycho-analytical criticism as autobiographical fallacy (p.34), he passes on to interpret his own poetry in psycho-analytical terms. His claim that poets are different from most novelists and dramatists because the latter do not reorganize their experience of the world or imply metaphysical truth is absurd. He is also unclear about the agency of poetry. He contends that poets are seers and yet describes the metaphysical truth of a poem as beyond his conscious intention. Although his argument is vitiated because his poem does not contain such truth, its major fault is that he does not resolve the clash between transcendent vision and passive spontaneity. This is not too surprising, however. For, one who uses the amount of clichés and mixed metaphors that Mr. Skelton does cannot be a guardian of culture or an apologist for poetry. His imprecise prose exposes the silliness of his pseudo-romantic ideas on poetry. Although the excerpts and drafts of poems that overburden his book are interesting occasionally, as a commentary on the living of poets the book is boring and lacking in both insight and humanity.

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*Byron: A Symposium.* Edited by John D. Jump. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975. Pp. xvi, 189. \$22.95.

"There were two main Byrons" wrote Wilson Knight almost twenty-five years ago. The custom of seeing multiple Byrons has been current since Arnold inherited Goethe's distinction between the poet and his personality, and persists in current critical opinion. W.J. Calvert's *Byron: Romantic Paradox* (1935) established for our own century the tension between Augustan and Romantic elements in Byron's career, and, ever since Eliot proclaimed *Don Juan* "the greatest of Byron's poems", this cleavage has distinguished the satiric from the Satanic Byron. Preference has been for the later *ottava rima* poems, which gave full scope to what Paul West has called Byron's "gift for irreverence", while the romantic Byron of *Childe Harold*,

*Manfred*, and the tales could be dismissed as "childish and theatrical" by Jump as recently as 1972. Developments in criticism over the past decade, however, indicate that the dominant taste for the so-called "anti-romantic" works is giving way to a broader reassessment of the Byron canon.

That exemplary assertion of the unity of Byron's consciousness, M.K. Joseph's *Byron the Poet* (1964), demonstrated the poet's consistent development from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* to *Don Juan*. Joseph's study of the manuscripts revealed the satiric tendency of *Childe Harold* in its original form, and his discussion of the theme of illusion and disillusion in the two major works argued for the continuity of disappointment and irony in Byron's vision. His influential reading of *Manfred* prompted a sympathetic re-examination of Byron's earlier period, of which the most distinguished products were Robert F. Gleckner's *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* and Jerome McGann's *Fiery Dust*. The effect of the emergence of these two critics, publishing in the same year (1968) without knowledge of one another's work, was to renew the debate over Byron's status as odd man out of the romantic movement. Reviving Blake's vision of "Lord Byron in the wilderness", Gleckner used Ridenour's detection of the Fall metaphor in *Don Juan* to claim that Byron's poetry develops a consistent world view that is anti-romantic in its emphasis on nothingness and despair. McGann, on the other hand, returned to the issue of personality by stressing what he calls the "egoistic imperatives" that led Byron to project images of himself and of the ideal in his verse. For McGann, Byron's willingness to find "ideal values in mortal things" insures the survival of his romantic impulse to seek a restored terrestrial paradise. Though we may now speak of Byron in terms of optimism and pessimism rather than of satire and romance, our understanding of the values asserted by his works remains divided.

Perhaps, then, a collection of essays like *Byron: A Symposium*, edited by John Jump and published by Macmillan of Canada (1975), is the only appropriate way to approach Byron at the present time. This volume assembles papers expressing diverse viewpoints that were delivered in various locations throughout Great Britain to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the poet's death. It opens with a piece of rather gossipy antiquarianism by A.L. Rowse on Byron's Cornish family connections, which perhaps contributes to our appreciation of his Celtic mobility of temperament. Jump's own contribution proves once again his sensitivity to the moods of Byron's prose and his mastery of its relation to the poetry. Describing the letters as "dramatic monologues", he suggests how the awareness of an audience implicit in that form pervades Byron's poetry. Francis Berry, in "The Poet of *Childe Harold*", demonstrates how even a disciple of Eliot may now find it necessary to reappraise Byron's heroic verse, and Gilbert Phelps clinches the argument with a persuasive defence of the "one Byron" theory. Phelps perceptively attributes Byron's actor-like adaptability to the poet's effort to come to terms with the contradictory elements in romanticism, and notes once again, in what becomes a persistent theme in these essays, Byron's awareness of his audience. Of the three essays included on Byron's satiric phase, A.B. England's most enlarges our consciousness of its affinities by pointing out its kinship with the burlesque mode of Butler and Swift, although Byron characteristically rejects the *saeva indignatio* of

the latter. Two essays on lesser-known works complete this treatment of Byron in all his aspects. Writing on Byron's political plays, Anne Barton discusses the common theme of self-destructive idealism that runs through all of Byron's tragedies, and shows how their seriousness of purpose entitles them to a greater claim on our attention. It can only be regretted, however, that the editor did not find occasion to include in the collection a similar plea in behalf of the neglected *Cain*, Byron's most readable experiment in the tragic mode. Finally, Paul Fleck subjects Byron's last completed poem, *The Island*, written in 1823 but only recently the object of critical attention, to a penetrating analysis which reveals that Byron, no less than Shelley, could adjust the demands of reality and the ideal in the delicate balance of a work of art.

Byron once warned Lady Blessington that it would be difficult to describe him, since he was "so changeable, being everything by turns and nothing long". *Byron: A Symposium* captures his infinite variety, avoiding because of its format the temptation endemic to Byron criticism of attempting to reduce him to simple, orderly principles. He was, *pace* Bertrand Russell, less a titanic asserter of self than a literary Proteus, experimenting like Hamlet with a series of roles that would forestall commitment and allow him to explore life's predicament.

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