Book Reviews

Charles A. Owen, *Pilgrimage and Storytelling in the Canterbury Tales.* University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1977. pp. 253. $12.50.

Robert B. Burlin, *Chaucerian Fiction.* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. pp. 292. $14.50.

Norman F. Blake, *The English Language in Medieval Literature.* J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., London, 1977. Rowan and Littlefield, Totowa, New Jersey, 1977. pp. 190. £7.95.

Discussion of the tale order and divisions of the *Canterbury Tales* has a history going back to Furnivall's *Temporary Preface* to the six-text edition. Involved in the discussion is the authority of the manuscript orders, e.g. the Ellesmere, the number of tales to be told, and a sequence which provides a reasonably satisfactory arrangement with regard to time and place and the arrival in Canterbury. Among modern editors, Manly, Robertson, and Donaldson adopt the Ellesmere order in their editions and point out its many problems. Baugh, on the other hand, adopts an order which he believes does least violence to allusions along the way.

The second chapter of Charles A. Owen's book deals with the stages of development of the *Canterbury Tales* and an order for the tales that accords, he feels, with time, place, and changing artistic design as Chaucer worked on them over a period of twelve to fifteen years. This chapter, in many ways the most interesting in his book, brings together and adds to theories Owen has previously presented in a number of articles.

All editions of the *Canterbury Tales* indicate a journey to Canterbury coming to its end with the Host stating:

> Lordynges everichoon,
> Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon.
> Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree,
> I trow that we han herd of ech degree,
> Almoost fulfild is al myn ordinaunce.

At this point we have twenty-three tales, two of which are fragments. The Host, "to knythe up wel a gret mateere," rather mockingly asks the Parson to tell the last, "a fable anon." The Parson answers he will tell no fables that "weyven soothfastenesse," but "moralitee and vertuous mattere."

The "General Prologue" promises four tales per pilgrim, two from each on the way to Canterbury and two homeward, and the Cook, for example, suggests there will be at least two before he and the Host part. The Summoner says he will tell tales two or three about Friars "er I come to Sidyngborne." This is stated

eleven tales prior to the "Prologue to the Monk's Tale" in the Ellesmere MS, where the Host refers to their passing Rochester. On the way to Canterbury Rochester is ten miles before Sittingbourne and the Summoner has told his only tale.

Owen's hypothesis that takes into account such discrepancies in order and number is very briefly as follows. Chaucer changed his plans at least twice in two main ways when developing the tales. The first conception had a sequence beginning with the Man of Law and in which what is now the *Shipman's Tale* belonged to the Wife of Bath. This was followed by a period when Chaucer abandoned the tales and wrote, among other things, the treatise on penitence, later the *Parson's Tale*, and the Retraction. The plan was taken up again and to this stage belongs, e.g., the conception of the 'marriage group.' The last plan involved the expansion to four tales, rather than a reduction from four to one, and a new beginning with the *Knight's Tale*. Chaucer became so caught up with his last plan that he continued it with vigour until his death, not taking time to clear discrepancies which he kept leaving until later.

Owen perceives the tales, such as we have, to cover a two way journey: two whole days on the way to Canterbury with the Canon and his Yeoman overtaking the pilgrims on the morning of the third day and the Yeoman telling the last tale on the outward journey. The homeward journey would begin with the *Manciple's Tale* followed by the series of tales called the 'marriage group' and set off by the Wife of Bath. "If Chaucer was to avoid anticlimax after the visit to the shrine in Canterbury, he needed vivid copy for the return to Southwark." The journey would end with the "Parson's Prologue" as an introduction for an unwritten final tale and then the supper at the Tabard with the awarding of the prize.

What, then, of the *Parson's Tale* and the Retraction as we now have it? "The Retraction and the 'Parson's Tale' are more closely linked to each other than either is to the *Canterbury Tales*. The Retraction, by the language in which it refers to the *Canterbury Tales*, not only eliminates itself as a conclusion for this work, but indicates a period when Chaucer abandoned his masterpiece." This was a period of religious commitment before the Wife of Bath exerted a hold over the poet's imagination. Further, "the Parson in the Prologue, is twice represented as a doer first, then a preacher . . . . If Chaucer intended the treatise for the *Parson's Tale*, he has not carried out the characterization given in the Prologue, and has, in the final story, violated one of the main thrusts of the pilgrimage — the strength of implicit morality." This may be, but Owen does not really come to grips with the statement in the "Parson's Prologue" that the Parson will tell no fables but 'moralitee and vertuous mateere.'

The sub-title of Owen's book is "Ernest and Game" and he examines the tales in the pattern and sequence developed in the first chapter. For Owen, the story-telling supplants pilgrimage, the "earnest of overt morality," and hence "the paradox of a 'game' more 'ernest' than 'ernest,' of value enjoyed as a pattern." As one expects in modern Chaucer criticism, though not always

so well done, Owen's analysis of the tales deals with the art of story-telling, characterization within the tales, and self-revelation on the part of the pilgrim narrators. Palamon is read as impetuous, Arcite as thoughful (Owen glides past Arcite's unchivalric argument that Palamon did not know whether Emilye was a goddess or a woman. Troilus uses the same compliment for Criseyde). Chivalric idealism in the Knight is matched by the earthiness of the Miller, Reeve, and Cook. The Miller is presented as bluff and sensual, the Reeve as sapless and hypocritical. For the characters of the *Shipman's Tale* "forms of religion permeate their lives without having the slightest effect on them." The *Prioress's Tale* shows the distortions of sentimentality revealed in her character in the "General Prologue," yet at the same time it expresses Chaucer's Christianity. The *Melibeus* has merits that few appreciate, e.g., that one combats evil by improving one's own conduct. The Nun's Priest, though he reveals anti-feminism and pedantry, does transcend these and in the struggle to do so "marks the struggle of the fragment's interest in the different kinds of commitment, expression, and disguises that fiction makes possible."

The longest chapter is called "The Wife of Bath's Influence." It is she who, on the homeward journey, changes the pattern into comedy of an order only hinted at earlier. Whether or not Chaucer's imagination was carried away by the Wife of Bath, Owen's certainly is. He finds many anomalies and contradictions in her view of marriage, a view that shows an equal enthusiasm for experience and authority. It is not very revealing, however, that she "reflects in her character two of the drives that psychoanalysts have found central in their study of human personality, the drives for sex and power." And interesting though his argument is that what she seeks all along is love and doesn't understand it when she has found it, he fails, I think, to convince.

The self-exposure continues. The Summoner, reprehensible enough in the "General Prologue," reveals an anal fixation. The Friar has only damaged himself by being so foolish as to engage in a quarrel. The Pardoner, with all his faults and almost damned, evokes sympathy for trying in the companionship of the pilgrims and in story-telling to escape, if only for a while, from his limited world. His offering of pardon to his fellow pilgrims is simply a parody or mockery of his own histrionics, a "sharing with others an enjoyment." The Host drives the Pardoner back into isolation. As for the Merchant, for his own sanity the happiness of any husband must be blind. The Franklin, of course, ends the marriage group. What remains is the "Parson's Prologue" for an unwritten final tale before the supper at the Tabard where "everyone knows and is known."

In general Owen's book is very readable and he offers some challenging concepts. His reconstruction of a two way journey is even highly plausible — for a five days journey in which some thirty tales may have been meant to be told. But it staggers the imagination how Chaucer could have worked in some one hundred and twenty tales. Perhaps Owen should exercise his ingenuity on that

The Bibliography of *Pilgrimage and Storytelling in the Canterbury Tales* is excellent. References to P.M. Kean (Patricia Margaret), however, would seem to call for "she" rather than "he".

Robert B. Burlin's *Chaucerian Fiction* deals with Chaucer's major poetic works. Basically it raises the questions: What was Chaucer's attitude towards his art? What was his theory of fiction (not that he consciously held one)? "What was the value of secular poetry to the City of God?"

In exploring the answers to these questions Burlin pursues one of Chaucer's favourite antinomies, "experience and authority," and the meaning these words may have held for him. The antinomy of experience and authority, he says, "may be said to form the structure of his imaginative works throughout his career"; further, "it addresses itself to the problems on the origins or the sources of literary activity," and this leads to a "questioning of the viability of the final product as a source of knowledge." Burlin, then, sees Chaucer's development through various stages in terms of an epistemological search. His primary concern, as he says, is not with the "grete mateere" of the poems, but with thematic undercurrents that relate more to the process of composition.

Burlin does not treat Chaucer's works according to a generally accepted chronology, though sometimes it turns out that way, but in a sequence aimed at following "the inner logic of his development." This is the kind of statement one often meets in the book and sometimes makes it difficult to follow Burlin's 'logic.' "Experience" and "authority" are revolved about as if in the whirl-a-gig of the *House of Fame*. To trace this inner logic the outer pattern adopted is Chaucer's "Poetic Fictions" followed by "Philosophical Fictions" and then "Psychological Fictions." The epistemological search leads finally to the Retraction which "in many ways represents a logical conclusion to his poetic career."

"Poetic Fictions" examines the dream-vision poems (excluding the *Parliament of Fowls*, which is placed with the philosophical fictions). The quotation accompanying the chapter title is meant, one presumes, to place 'poetic' in some kind of perspective: "Crafty Imagynacionys Off Thingys Fantastyk." In these poems Chaucer "constructs aesthetic models, hypotheses about the nature and uses of fiction for which there was no theoretical formulation available to him." In the *Legend of Good Women* the world of books (authority) and the world of nature (experience) become interpenetrating and inseparable. Though Burlin doubts Chaucer's satisfaction with what he was about in the *House of Fame*, it is not "the first or last time Chaucer will intimate that the opposition of experience and authority is an illusion, a false dichotomy of the philosophers." Even if Burlin's concern is not with the great matter of the poems, I find his discussion of the *House of Fame* dry and too curt.

The *Parliament* is separated from the dream-visions because it seems less concerned with the activity of making poetry than the

others. We are dealing with thematic content rather than form. In addition to the *Parliament*, the "Philosophic Fictions" examines the *Knight's Tale, Troilus and Criseyde*, and the *Clerk's Tale*. These are all perceived to share the themes of Nature, Love, and Fortune. In refashioning ready-made themes Chaucer is represented as having arrived at a sufficient sense of the use of fiction that he might test it on the fictions of others. As a true philosophical poem, the Parliament unfolds "a progress that makes us conscious of how we know, it implies more than one might expect about what we know." Of course to accept this, one must agree with Burlin's inferences. In the *Knight's Tale* and the *Troilus and Criseyde* Chaucer is obliged to observe both "the limitations of human psychology and the limitations of human knowledge." Palamon and Arcite are mere characterless counters in a philosophic inquiry. They as well as Theseus are "paradigmatic" figures in a tale that poses abstract questions about the human condition. The *Troilus*, on the other hand, is organized to focus on ethical implications of conduct. In both poems Chaucer "expresses the philosophic poet's urgent need to examine the ground of human experience that makes the consolation of theology necessary." It is not always clear where Burlin in heading, but here, at least, it is fairly obvious.

In general, I find Burlin's analysis of *Troilus and Criseyde* the most satisfactory part of his book, perhaps because here he does get involved in the 'grete mateere.' His reading of Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus is well-balanced and thoughtful. He perceives equally well the comedy and tragedy of the human condition in the temporal world. He makes a good case for the much debated "Epilogue" as springing dramatically from a fictional world that has proved intractable to the narrator's making. If the "Epilogue" is related to any part of the Christian myth it is, he says, rather to the expulsion from Eden than the Redemption.

In the "philosophic Fictions" in general we are presented with dramatic reenactments of the "experience" of "authority." This leads to the question, what is the authority of experience? And so we come to the "psychological Fictions," the "Canterbury Experiment."

Burlin examines a number of the *Canterbury Tales* in pairs. Much of the thematic analysis has to do with self-revelation of the pilgrim-narrators and of Chaucer himself. The Friar condemns himself by endorsing the methods of the fiend. The *Summoner's Tale* shows the moral distaste Chaucer shared with theologians for presumption. The Pardoner is devoted to turning substance into accidence, to taking signs for things, and is "spiritually, physically and morally impotent." The Canon's Yeoman is trapped by a limited verbal experience and is "ready to submit to whatever authority comes along." The Franklin places "immediate happiness above a patient submission to established order," and the Merchant "creates a fictional world in which language determines the final reality and words may be manipulated at will." The Wife of Bath embodies an interpenetration of fiction and reality in a character "exhibiting tension between new experience and old authority." The *Nun's Priest's Tale* is about

jangling, about "that point at which the abuse of language touches upon the abuse of reason." Where Burlin is now going seems quite clear enough when one begins to sort it out, and is perhaps best seen in his treatment of the *Prioress's Tale* as reflecting "quest literature." The passage of the young student on his way to school "comes to suggest the progress of the Christian soul through the temporal world. Beset on every side by the agents of 'oure first foo,' even the innocent are not free from harm, and the only thing is to prepare for things eternal by making oneself an instrument of God's praise."

What we ultimately have in Chaucer's fiction, then, is a dramatic presentation of the follies of man's search for knowledge. Chaucer's progress leads inevitably to the Retraction, going back beyond the humanistic tradition of "Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine" to a more strictly historical interpretation of St. Paul: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

As I have intimated, the argument in Burlin's book is not always easy to follow. In this respect it is helpful that he often gives a brief resume at the beginning of a chapter of the point at which he has arrived in the preceding one. I would even advise the reader to read the last chapter first as an outline to go by. The bibliography is useful but not as extensive as Owen's. As he says, "I have tried to keep annotation to a minimum; Chaucerian bibliographies are more than adequate." Two wrong references leap to the eye, to the "General Prologue" on pages 203 and 273. I have not checked for others.

N. F. Blake's book, *The English Language in Medieval Literature*, it would appear from the preface, is primarily directed towards graduate students studying medieval English literature (though the title does seem a bit odd). To this end, the first two chapters are of a general nature, the remaining devoted to specialized topics that could be used in seminars. In the first chapter one reads the striking statement: "the literary works that survive have come down to us in a written form and it seems most sensible to confine our attention to that form." There can be no discussion about that.

The book is far from direct. The expression is often tortuous and laboured. At least one has to grasp one's way through, and this is not always attributable to the concept the author wishes to express. One even finds such a sentence as: "His name carried a certain cachet and authority on which others wished to capitalize on." Or take the following: "It is notable, for example, that many different English translations of a single French or Latin work could be made, presumably because individual translators were unaware that translations of their text already existed." In the context in which this is placed it is surely woolly for students. If it is read as an hypothesis, it is not "notable"; if factual, presumably "could be" should be "were." Better punctuation would often help in involved passages and even in such a sentence as: "Contrary to what might be expected from the foregoing English authors did recognize different styles, for par-

ticularly in the Middle English period a variety of styles emerged." My temptation is to read a comma after "English."

Literary references are not always illuminating. For example, Blake refers to a passage in the *Kingis Quair* as imitating a scene from the *Knight's Tale*; it also imitates a scene from *Troilus and Criseyde*. There are also too many generalized statements and to students some could be misleading, for example: "One reason which accentuated the feeling of impermanence in the language was the absence of any formal teaching of the English language, for only Latin grammar was taught in the schools." But this grammar was taught by construing into English and must perforce have involved grammatical principles that could be applied to that language. Further, in writing about familiarity with languages in medieval England, Blake makes the following comparison: "Yet modern studies have shown that when a man is familiar with two languages, as happens today in some parts of the United States of America, his command of one language will be influenced by his knowledge of the other." The particularization of the qualifying clause escapes me.

In calling attention to modern editorial practices, Blake chastises such editors as Kane, Schmidt, and Robinson. For example, he quotes from the *Nun's Priest's Tale* in Robinson's *Chaucer*:

> But swiche a joye was it to here hem synge
> Whan that the brighte sonne gan to sprynge,
> In swete accord, "My lief has faren in londe"

Blake tries to make the case that "the use of inverted commas and the capital M of My indicate a title." (Incidentally, I have quoted directly from Robinson; Blake in doing so uses only single inverted commas). "The modern editor has misled the reader into assuming these words have a special prominence." This is misleading trivia. As I read it, and even though there is a lyric beginning with this line, it is simply a direct quotation referring to a line, a title if one wills, or simply something the hens made up.

More than occasionally the book has a 'writing down' note: "In the Middle English period we take Chaucer as our norm and assume that all authors and readers were as familiar with French literary works as he was." Here, one might rightly ask who is doing the assuming.

If taken at face value, Blake could sound the death knell of much modern criticism. Parody is something we foist on Middle English literature. For example, he believes most attempts to find incongruity in *Sir Thopas* are desperate, and few are convincing. Further "The modern search for subtlety in literature has led to the discovery of a large number of puns in medieval literary works; it seems few of these were intended by their authors."

However, in spite of what I perceive as faults, the book is useful in a number of ways. One of the chapters Blake calls discursive is perhaps the most straightforward in the book. There are good introductions to such problems as syntax, punctuation, and voca-

bulary that cannot be found easily elsewhere. I would simply add a note of caution. Though the book is published in the U.K. in Everyman's University Library I would be wary of "Everyman I will go with thee, and be thy guide / In thy most need to go by thy side."

Earl F. Guy

John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. pp. xiv + 271. $17.60.

Mr. Hunt's stimulating argument is that in the eighteenth century landscape gardening dominated the other arts because it was the paradigm of expressiveness. Having absorbed the influential blend of real and imagined scenery in late seventeenth-century Italian painting and the new conceptions of mind and mental satisfaction, landscape gardening, according to Mr. Hunt, cohered its theory and practice better than the other arts and, consequently, not only best helped the individual to enjoy a balanced sense of the internal and external worlds and to explore archetypal and individual psychological experience, but also afforded aesthetic structures to poetry and painting which at first allowed them to borrow from one another until, by the end of the century, it had effected their independence.

Beginning with the emblem of the hermit and hermitage, Mr. Hunt contrasts the attempts of landscape gardeners to make the relation between solitary meditator and setting an expressive one with poet's relatively conservative use of the emblem. A somewhat cursory survey of Vaughan, Cowley, and Marvell reveals that these poets were only dimly aware that there could be more than traditional allusive significance in landscape. Pope, however, affords Mr. Hunt the opportunity to advance his thesis by illuminating the poet's career and the thematic integrity of the *Moral Essays.* For, Mr. Hunt evidences the extent to which Pope derived self-knowledge from gardening and maintains that the poet possessed a sense that gardens could reflect and stimulate the mind, that they could represent what is mentally permanent and define what is mentally progressive. Pope's grotto, for example, evinces concern for the psychological experience of gardens and for a private, as distinct from traditional, control of the relations between meditation and scenery. Again, the *Moral Essays* seem to be coherent because, after examining prescriptions against psychological indeterminateness, they end by exemplifying a trust in gardening as the best way to respond to and contain psychological variousness. Mr. Hunt concludes, quite challengingly, that gardening refreshed Pope's poetry, turning it away from theoretical issues towards practical morality, and that his trust in gardening explains Pope's reliance upon his grotto as the base of his later satire.

Although Mr. Hunt contends that Thomson's appreciation of landscape gardens effected revisions in *The Seasons* by enabling the poet to shape his meditations, he finds only an awkward and

stale relation between the poem's emblematic and expressive elements. Indeed, his extended treatment of this poet appears intent, too slightingly, on connecting deficiencies in Thomson's gardenist perspectives to the supposedly prevalent distrust of the imagination and to the allegedly restricted public role of the poet. It seems that, despite his willingness to describe the solitary imagination's encounter with natural phenomena and to record the mental reciprocity of meditator and scenery, Thomson was not sufficiently excited by the consequent mental tensions with the result that he turned to merely picturesque treatments of landscape. Mr. Hunt judges that Thomson's syntax, in particular, his inversions and connectives, shows that he evaded the relation of gardenist and picturesque stances and that he ignored the flexible syntax which arises from the details of a garden's changing vistas as they strike the mind. Since Thomson's poetic personality enhances mood rather than focusses the value of scenes, Mr. Hunt's predictable assessment is that his poetry does not match his theoretical gardenist insights.

In his discussion of Gray, Collins, and Young, Mr. Hunt affirms that the poetry is significant only in so far as it follows the lead of gardening and painting in looking beyond the landscape garden for ideas of the sublime. While, according to Mr. Hunt, Gray was right to scorn conventional gardens, to pioneer the picturesque, and to seek for associative patterns in landscape in obedience to advanced taste, scepticism about the poet's role made him distrustful of poetic sensibility and unable to draw on the new perspectives. By contrast, Collins' poetry is valued because, in his characteristic merging of emblematic figures with expressive settings, he was reprocessing traditional literary allusions according to the aesthetic dictates of landscape gardening. The largely depreciatory treatment of Young provides support for the literary worth of gardenist structures in its conclusion that night poetry had to be set aside because it could not promote congruence between the senses and imagination which, for Mr. Hunt, is the sole means of developing an inward landscape of introspection.

In the last chapter, Mr. Hunt shows that gardening led the other arts in stimulating the excitements of mental process and that its non-intellectual attempt to absorb the figure into the landscape encouraged the separation of the arts. His explanation of painterly stance and the mediation of figures and his analysis of Gainsborough's radical manipulation of visual media and his break with the literary bases of painting brilliantly demonstrate how gardening endowed painting with a model of independence. As regards Goldsmith and Cowper, Mr. Hunt insists that poetry derived its notion of affectiveness from gardening simultaneously with its effort to break away from the picturesque. His excessive but provocative claim that whatever is new and fresh in poetry is gleaned from gardening is his climactic evidence for the cultural centrality of gardening.

One reason for paraphrasing Mr. Hunt's argument is that it is not always easy to follow. Occasionally it becomes buried under miscellaneous details or clouded by impressions and generalizations. Although the commentary is always interesting and

learned, the criticism of the poets, excepting that of Pope, tends to be sketchy and unsustained. Truisms about Augustan poetic role are unexamined, and influences on the poetry other than those of gardening and painting, Lockean psychology for example, are treated superficially. Furthermore, Mr. Hunt may claim to be committed disinterestedly to literary history, but his Romantic prejudices clearly detract from his criticism. His remarks on syntax and affectiveness, matters the poets really worked at, undervalue elements vital to the Augustan poetic tradition even though he tries to expound on them. Despite considerable deficiencies in criticism, Mr. Hunt's study is to be recommended as a pioneering work in interdisciplinary studies and cultural history.

University of Alberta Robert James Merrett

A. Dwight Culler. *The Poetry of Tennyson.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977. pp. 276. $15.00.

In little more than a decade and a half we have had books on Tennyson's poetry by Buckley, Pitt, Steane, Kissane, Ricks, and Turner, not to mention the more specialized but comprehensive studies of Brashear, Smith, Joseph, Priestley, Kincaid, and Shaw, and works of narrower focus by Killham, Rader, Pettigrew, Sinfield, Reed, Eggers, Ryals, and Rosenberg. What can another study do that has not already been done?

Culler begins by implying in his "Acknowledgments" that his chief contribution will be the publication of material from letters and papers so long in private hands but now available to scholars. To a considerable extent this is misleading. He quotes from only three of Tennyson's unpublished letters (late in his book he confesses that the poet was an indifferent letter-writer), and somewhat more frequently from notes on proof-sheets and personal copies. When Culler draws extensively from manuscripts, he does so not so much from Trinity papers no longer under interdiction but rather from Edward Fitzgerald's wry and sometimes caustic marginalia in his copy of the 1842 poems. It is not in his employment of manuscript, then, that Culler makes a substantial contribution to Tennyson studies, interesting as this is.

His fresh use of published material makes a more substantial contribution. Some of this material comes from such familiar sources as Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir* and E. C. Stedman's *Victorian Poets*; some of it from sources as esoteric as Erasmus Widmann's *Musikalischer Tugendtspiegel* of 1613 and Ralph V. Chamberlain's 1932 University of Utah essay, *Life in Other Worlds.* Irrespective of the source, Culler is able to shed new light on the significance of Tennyson's "lady" poems, on the relation of R. C. Trench to "The Palace of Art," on the Alexandrian elements in Victorian writing, on *In Memoriam's* relationship to Wordsworth's *Essay on Epitaphs* and to contemporary pamphlets on immortality, on the development in European literature of Rousseau's invention, the monodrama, and its influence on "Maud," and on a host of other topics. Thus he reminds us that "the epyllion or little epic is now considered to be a ghost form," thereby laying a

spectre which has haunted Tennyson studies since Marshall McLuhan led us all astray twenty-five years ago.

Nearly half this book is devoted to Tennyson's four long poems. There are good things here, of course: explaining the weird seizures of the protagonist in *The Princess* as Tennyson's attempt "to create something analogous to the trancelike experience which he knew as a boy and which he always associated with poetic power," indeed, seeing the Princess herself as a symbol of Tennyson's poetic development. Culler views the form of *In Memoriam* as being intimately related to the contemporary expression of wisdom and religious truth in aphorisms, aperçus, and lyrical paragraphs, that is, in suggestive fragments, not definitive systems, as in *Guesses at Truth* by Julius and Augustus Hare. (The former was Tennyson's tutor at Cambridge.) Culler is surely right, moreover, in declaring that it is idle to suppose that anyone can nowadays read the final scene of *Maud* and like it; two world wars and other hideous conflicts of our century have made war an impossible solution, either for society's problems or the individual's neuroses. And then there are Culler's pointed pages on the *Idylls of the King*: on "how late in Arthur's reign are the events which Tennyson has chosen to describe," showing that these events portray the disintegration of Arthurian society, and that the fragmentation of that society is reflected in the very structure of the poem.

Like other critics, Culler sees Tennyson adopting a number of roles as he progresses in his art: the poet as hierophant who chants the quasi-mystical word to lift himself into a world beyond all language; the poet as witness of the apocalypse, of Armageddon; the poet as one who bridges the gulf between the human and the divine; then the poet as a man speaking to men in the garden of the mind; but first and last, Tennyson as Merlin in pursuit of "The Gleam" of the higher poetic imagination.

But it is in connection with Tennyson's shorter poems that Culler makes his most important contribution; I am not referring to the many perceptive comments on theme, structure, image, and prosody of lyrics early and late, famous and obscure. He analyzes and explicates these with great skill, and judges with more discrimination than almost anyone else has done. What I am referring to is Culler's main contribution to recent Tennyson studies. And it is a startling one, for he locates the true Tennyson not in the brilliant poems based on myth, not in the political and patriotic poems, and not in the four poems of greatest length, but in two groups of shorter poems, the English idyls and the poems of social converse. The former, Culler declares, Tennyson found "most in harmony with his genius" (p. 147). At the end of his long, informative, and beautiful chapter on the English idyls, Culler asserts that these poems are not trivial but works of a subtle and delicate art, and adds,

> In my opinion, they are among the finest of Tennyson's poems, certainly the most neglected in proportion to their merit of all of Tennyson's works. . . . And yet they are not poems of escape. They solve the problem, better than

> Clough's *Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich* or Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, of how to combine the the persons and topics of everyday life with the heightened beauty which we look for in poetry.

These poems include "The Day-Dream" (for which he provides a brilliant analysis of structure and imitative form), and "Godiva" (neither of these two is an English idyl, strictly speaking), "The Gardener's Daughter," "The Miller's Daughter," "Walking to the Mail," "Audley Court," "Edwin Morris," and "The Golden Year," which variously present pictures or characters, but all of which share in a spirit of reconciliation.

Concerning the verse epistles and other poems of social converse Culler writes that of all the stances which Tennyson assumed as a poet the one which appears here (as well as in the idyls) "of a civilized Englishman speaking in his own voice to civilized peers is most naturally his own" (p. 249). Indeed,

> One has the feeling that this association of poetry with social life and manners is more in accord with Tennyson's deeper instincts than the disjunction of poetry from society which he asserted for so many years.

At this point, of course, Culler, is writing of Tennyson's elegy to Sir John Simeon, of the early poem to James Spedding (I cannot value this as highly as Culler does for it seems to me to have defects in diction and in sentiment), of the invitation "To Mary Boyle," and of the great verse epistles to F. D. Maurice, Professor Jebb, and Edward Fitzgerald. In these poems the Horatian Tennyson speaks with both delicacy of feeling and a delightful intimacy that make him what he called Simeon, the "Prince of Courtesy."

A word or two of criticism and of summary. Though he shares Tennyson the bed of Procrustes into which he unfortunately forced Arnold in *The Imaginative Reason*, Culler's style still irritates here and there as in his Arnold book from the overuse of the causative "for." Then, too, though on the whole a careful proof-reader, Culler has overlooked half a dozen misprints, some of them howlers, as when he says Keats died in 1824 and *The Holy Grail* was published in 1873, and some of them misquoting Tennyson, as "See" for "She" on p. 126 and "they" for "thy" on p. 227. But this perhaps is carping, for Culler has produced a distinguished study, the fullest account that we have of Tennyson in pursuit of "The Gleam," and a quite indispensable analysis of two groups of neglected verse. Whether or not we can value these poems as highly as he does, he has at least corrected an imbalance in Tennyson criticism; never again will we be able to ignore the poems of social converse or the idyls of English life.

Robert H. Tener.

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