Book Reviews

Harry Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy and Novel-Making.* Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979. pp. xii, 370. $17.50.

An interesting omission in Harry Stone's subtitle is the word "realism" because his usually meticulously ordered book is as much concerned with reality as with fantasy, both terms in any case frustratingly elusive of definition. Throughout his study Stone amplifies with acceptable argument and lively scholarship his claim in his preface that Dickens' "storybook effects are usually part of a captivating and compelling realism." Elsewhere he sees progression and development in Dickens' fiction in order of publication. In his assessment of the first six novels, which he calls questionably "apprentice novels," he finds them not fully achieving an adequate integration of "fairy-tale devices and techniques" with "a steady cohesive marshalling of the fantasy elements." What is required is "a satisfactory blending of the manipulative storybook plot and the realistic workings of the novel" and "a reciprocal and more consistent relationship between the fairy-tale plot and the many fairy-tale elements . . . already imbedded in the central realism" (pp. 117-18). Such a successfully maintained integration leads to "Dickens' transforming vision of life" (p. 192) which is achieved in *David Copperfield* after his experiment with a "New Fairy-Tale Method," the title of Stone's chapter on *Dombey and Son*. *Copperfield* in turn leads to the ultimate and paramount "Fairy-Tale Transformation," the title of his second chapter on *Great Expectations*, which is in fact "an inverted fairy tale." The fairy-tale element "gives order and concision to the autobiographical, factual, social, and moral complexities of *Great Expectations* and helps endow the novel with the universality of myth" (p. 299). By fairy tales Stone means "not simply fairy stories, but folklore, myths, legends, enchantments, dreams, signs, recurrences, correspondences, indeed all the mysterious murmurings of the invisible world" (p. x). It is this rich heritage and traditional agglomeration of story in its widest application that is conjoined with the reality of everyday and thus gives to Dickens' fiction that magical transcendence which achieves its perfection of utterance in *Great Expectations.*

Such a summary unavoidably butchers a densely argued critical study, which is among the best of recent years. We may shy at some of the larger claims of interpretative finality and although generally the argument is lucidly and patiently mounted, fine distinctions between such concepts as "transformation" and "transcendence" are, perhaps inevitably, not always readily apparent. So eminently sane and accredited a Dickens scholar as Stone is obviously aware, and with proper modesty implies as much in his preface, that his is not the only approach to a full understanding of Dickens but in his single-minded and enthusiastic championing of his thesis he rarely acknowledges other, decidely viable, avenues of appreciation. The variety, and to use Stone's term, transcendence, of Dickens' humour, for instance, is for some of us of high importance.

This is not intended for one minute to undervalue Dickens' "invisible world" which Stone sees Dickens exploiting to the full and which gives to the basic mundane world of his narrative and the perfunctory reality of dull routine a magical and spiritual and sometimes dread lambency. Stone's theoretic progression is fortunately not left in the forensic abstract but is frequently and soundly reinforced by a wealth of illustration which indicates an intelligence of total familiarity, of shrewd selection and of discriminating commentary. The referential evidence comprises for me both the conviction and vibrancy of this book, but one example, in this case of the fusion of fantasy and reality, will have to serve:

> When Jonas descends one evening into his unused back room, pleading exhaustion, and asking not to be disturbed day or night for two nights, the spectral embodiment of his darker self overwhelms him: "As the gloom of evening, deepening into night, came on, another dark shade emerging from within him seemed to overspread his face, and slowly change it. Slowly, slowly; darker and darker; more and more haggard; creeping over him by little and little; until it was black night within him and without." This change, of course, is realistic and magical, literal and symbolic. The room is equally realistic, and equally magical: "It was a blotched, stained, mouldering room, like a vault; and there were water-pipes running through it, which at unexpected times in the night, when other things were quiet, clicked and gurgled suddenly, as if they were choking." The room, like a magic glass, conveys what Jonas is feeling and prefigures his deed. . . . Jonas prepares to glide into the street, dressed in countryman's garb. He waits at the door. He listens to the clamoring church bells proclaim his presence (so he feels) to all the town; he hears two passersby talk of undiscovered murders.
>
> As Jonas moves toward his deed, the whole universe shudders and quakes. When he passes by, people shrink, children see dark shadows in their sleep, dogs howl and rats follow him. His footsteps seem to leave a red mire, like Cain's; all nature appears to be watching him.
>
> (p. 97. I have omitted numbers of textual references)

In such passages, of which there are many, the certainty of application, assimilation of Dickensian atmospheres and sensitive immediacy of the writing make for refreshing criticism in today's market.

Dickens' fascination with the invisible world — Stone's accommodating phrase is apt and convenient — and his narrative recognition of it in the commerce and experience of most of our lives has of course not gone critically unremarked but he is the first scholar, the term is particularly appropriate in his case, to write of it at such comprehensive length and to attach to it such crucial importance. His assiduous, often witty, accumulation of relevant factors is apparent in many places, as for example, in his disquisition on the young Dickens' reading where, among other things, we note his comment on contemporary children's literature: "In the ensuing centuries the relentless denunciation of childish sin was continued by a host of additional writers. In the eighteenth century the formidable Mrs. Trimmer, an indefatigable opponent of fantasy, was the foremost castigator of infant vice. In the nineteenth century Mrs. Sherwood took her place" (p. 20). There follows an account of not only Mrs. Sherwood's success in numbing and sterilizing a child's imagination and of a fearsome array of other works of disabling literature but of Dickens' precocious ability to get hold of imaginative writings, far exceeding the range of the titles mentioned by David in his "blessed little room" in *Copperfield.* Stone's illuminating and substantiated research into this and other relevant areas endows a sometimes contentious study with assurance and reliability.

Dickens and the Invisible World makes for compulsive reading for students of Dickens of whatever degree of specialization and also has much to say to others in other fields. Above all, despite some of the theoretical pleading which doubtless has its own values, the writing pleases, is eminently readable and reveals Stone not only impressively conversant with the details of Dickens' fiction but receptive also to the many intimations seeding both the intelligence and the entertainment of his narrative.

GEORGE WING

Paula Neuss, ed., *Magnificence.* Manchester: Manchester University Press; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. pp. xvi, 229. $16.00.

John Skelton wrote over sixteen hundred lines that overtly celebrate himself and his works. Among these lines we find four in "The Garlande of Laurell" (1523) that refer to his mirror for magistrates, the *Speculum Principis*:

> A tratyse he devisid and browght it to pas,
> Callid Speculum Principis, to bere in his honde,
> Therein to rede, and to vnderstande
> All the demeanour of princely astate.

When Alexander Dyce published his two-volume edition of Skelton's works in 1843 and when R. L. Ramsay edited *Magnifycence* in 1908 (E.E.T.S., E.S. 98), the treatise that might conceivably have shed some light on Skelton's humanism, his anti-court satires, and his only extant play was presumed lost. Neither editor, nor anyone else for that matter, could find the *Speculum Principis*, which had last been mentioned by Tanner in 1748 as a work held by the Lincoln Cathedral Library.

In 1934, F. M. Salter, of the University of Alberta, surprised the growing community of scholars interested in Skelton with the discovery of the long-lost manuscript in the British Museum (Add. 26, 787). But the discovery was ultimately disappointing. Skelton is no humanist in this unambitious treatise — no Castiglione, no Elyot. Rather, he cribs from Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*, the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum*, and a host of other authorities a series of moral precepts meant to edify the young Prince Henry, for whom Skelton was tutor. The key had been found, but it failed to open the lock. Unaided by the *Speculum Principis*, editors and critics had still to knock hard against the mind of a man who as poet laureate and *orator regius* wrote increasingly vitriolic denunciations of Wolsey, only to recant in "The Garlande of Laurell" and to end his career with poems dedicated to the very man he had satirized mercilessly.

Paula Neuss' new edition of *Magnificence* for the "Revels Plays" resurrects our interest in the work that David Bevington, in *Tudor Drama and Politics*, terms a "speculum play." It is arguable that in this speculum, rather than in his treatise, critics will find an entrée to the darker recesses of both Skelton's literary method and his disapproving and conservative attitudes to Henry VIII's court. It is surely inconceivable that commentators on Skelton's poetry will be able any longer virtually to ignore the centrality of the play in the canon, as William Nelson did when he gave it only two pages in his book on the poet, and as Stanley Fish did when he excluded it altogether. Neuss' edition effectively challenges Ramsay's verdict that "the undeniable intrinsic dulness and monotony of the play affords much to justify [its] neglect."

Neuss' introduction is alive to the subtlety of Skelton's ethical and political insights. Unlike Ramsay, who emphasizes the transitional rôle of *Magnificence* in the evolution of the English morality, Neuss attempts always to orient us to the special merits of the play itself:

> *Magnificence* might be described as having three levels of interest, corresponding to the three "genres" it combines: the allegorical level, in which Magnificence corresponds to the Mankind figure over whose soul, or perhaps more accurately in whose mind, the Virtues (of measure), and the Vices (measure's enemies), are warring; the philosophical level, in which Skelton is interested in considering the implications of the statement "Measure is treasure" and the meaning of "magnificence"; and the literal or narrative level, where we follow the story of a particular prince who ceases to be aware of the virtues of moderation, and loses his power after inviting corrupt conspirators to the court. (p. 22)

In the course of elaborating on the polysemous character of the whole, Neuss adjusts several received opinions on the play. While acknowledging the importance of Aristotle and Horace as early proponents of the play's thesis, she relates it to a native tradition in which Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and, even more, his "Mesure is Tresour" and "A Song of Just Mesure" are conspicuous. Furthermore, she casts considerable doubt on the inferences by which Ramsay dates the play as the work of 1515-16, and proposes, albeit tentatively, that, lacking evidence to the contrary, we do better to assign it to the early 1520's. This is a particularly important suggestion, for by grouping the play with "Speke, Parrot" and the other poems aimed at Wolsey, Neuss strengthens a convincing case, made here with unusual vigour and range of documentation, for the hero's shadowing less the fiscally irresponsible King himself than his chief "prince." Finally, in her analysis of language and versification, Neuss offers some sensitive observations on the correspondence between Magnificence's degeneration and the metre's loss of measure; these remarks should supplement Ramsay's able, but somewhat turgid discussion of the dramatist's poetic craftsmanship.

As editor, Neuss unfailingly exemplifies the dictum that "measure is treasure." She departs from standard editorial practice for the Revels series by occasionally retaining original spellings. Although the text produced is thus a compromise, Neuss' decision is justified by the prevalence of archaic diction, Skelton's word-play, and the need to preserve not just rhyme, but rhythm based on stress not syllable. "Franesy," not "frenzy" appears at one juncture for the sake of rhythm; "countenaunce," at another, is the spelling for "continence," since Skelton may intend an ironic association with Counterfeit Countenaunce. For readers less intimate with early sixteenth-century language than she is, Neuss glosses familiar-looking words whose meanings or connotations have changed even slightly, with frequent recourse to the O.E.D. With its uncumbersome apparatus that collates Dyce and Ramsay, where appropriate, against the 1530 copy-text, the edition will be useful to both scholars and those reading the play for the first time.

Neuss offers some emendations that prove that daring conjectures are compatible with textual conservatism. At line 579, for instance, the Folio text, followed willy-nilly by Dyce and Ramsay, is quite obscure as Cloaked Collusion says "Thou hast made me play the Iurde hayte." Neuss, noting that Collusion has entered, according to the stage direction, "cum elato aspectu," hazards that the correct reading for "Iurde hayte" is "John de Height" ("hayte" in original spelling). Given the appellation "John de Gay" at l. 959, this is a plausible and inspired guess. Neuss also wrestles with some seemingly corrupt Latin stage directions ("frequently defying emendation" exclaimed Ramsay) and wins several falls: Folly enters at l. 1041 "faciendo multum" (F), which Neuss emends to "faciendo tumultum" (making a commotion); Poverty's last words are to be rendered "difidendo," a mistake, Neuss claims, for "diffidendo" (despairingly) not as Dyce and Ramsay conclude, for "discedendo" (departing). One other emendation deserves notice, since it occurs in the midst of Measure's important enunciation of the play's theme: citing Wisdom XI.21 ("omnia mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti"), Neuss arrives at the reading "In ponder, by number, by measure, all thing is wrought" (l. 118), which puts right for the first time F's "I ponder . . ."

The annotations to the text are comprehensive, concise and helpful, but a few lapses occur. When Poverty says to Magnificence near the end of the play "Now must your feet lie higher than your crown" (l. 2008), Neuss says candidly "I am unable to explain this, unless perhaps Magnificence is lying with his head hanging over the edge of the bed." Here literalism has clouded Neuss' customary insight into the levels of meaning in the play, for Poverty, with a pun on "crown," is commenting on the revolution of Fortune's wheel which has brought the hero from felicity to adversity and thereby turned his world "up-so-down." (Cf. Donne on the bed as type of the grave: "Here the head lies as low as the foot.") A mistake occurs too in the editor's remark on the following lines:

> *Collusion.* Marry sir, this gentleman called me javel
> *Conveyance.* Nay, by Saint Mary, it was ye called me knave.
> (ll. 2210-12)

Neuss says: "Conveyance's memory is not as good as Collusion's; the word *knave* was not used." This note fails to recognize that in an earlier exchange Collusion had called his colleague "javel" (rascal) after Conveyance had called him "cavel" (knave). The point is either that neither remembers properly the origin of the quarrel, since there is little wit and less honour among the thieves who have carried prosperity away, or, more generally, that these partners in crime are as indistinct as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Magnificence, now available in this fine edition, deserves to be more widely known. As a *speculum principis*, it is a major text in a tradition that includes, after all, Shakespeare's English history plays and, to a point, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. And despite Skelton's worry over Henrician financial policies, Wolsey's abuse of power, and Anglo-French relations, the play transcends its immediate historical context. Skelton, as W. H. Auden has written, "takes as his subjects matters of which the accidents may be peculiar to his times, but the substance is common to all, and not least to our own."

RONALD B. BOND

Patrick Rafroidi and Terence Brown, eds., *The Irish Short Story*. Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille; Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1979. pp. 305. $28.25.

This collection of essays will further enhance the reputation of Lille as a centre for Irish studies. C.E.R.I.U.L. (University of Lille Centre for Irish Studies) publications include: P. Rafroidi's *L'Irlande et le Romantisme*; C. Fierobe's *Charles Robert Maturin*; J. Genet's *William Butler Yeats*; French translations of works by Brian Moore, James Plunkett and Mary Lavin; reprints of two nineteenth-century texts; and three other collective studies, *Aspects of the Irish Theatre*, *France-Ireland, Literary Relations* and *The Irish Novel in Our Time*.

Over twenty years ago, in his introduction to *Modern Irish Short Stories*, Frank O'Connor wrote: "I believe that the Irish short story is a distinct art form: that is, by shedding the limitations of its popular origin it has become susceptible to development in the same way as German song, and in its attitudes it can be distinguished from Russian and American stories which have developed in the same way." What O'Connor attempted to demonstrate through a collection of twenty stories, the editors of *The Irish Short Story* attempt to demonstrate through a collection of twenty essays. The volume is an essential companion to *The Irish Novel in Our Time* (1975), with which it is closely linked. In the latter volume no study appears of writers like Liam O'Flaherty, Sean O'Faolain and Frank O'Connor who, in the opinion of the editors, were best approached through their short stories. On the other hand, writers like Benedict Kiely and Edna O'Brien, who were considered in *The Irish Novel in Our Time*, were excluded from *The Irish Short Story* regardless of their merits as short story writers. In a practical solution to an obvious problem, some authors were arbitrarily assigned to one volume or another. This explains the absence of essays on George Moore and James Joyce in the novel volume and their appearance in the short

story volume. Unfortunately, one consequence of the decision is the impression created by the editors that they regard Moore and Joyce to be among those writers "who could be examined with equivalent profit through their longer or their shorter works." The achievements and stature of some writers are such that they should have been considered in both volumes.

The first four essays in *The Irish Short Story* provide a general survey of the subject from its origins to the present: "Story-Telling: The Gaelic Tradition"; "The Irish Short Story in English. The Birth of a New Tradition"; "Imaginative Responses Versus Authority Structures. A theme of the Anglo-Irish Short Story"; and "First Impressions 1968-78." The balance of the essays consider the short stories of William Carleton, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Sommerville and Ross, George Moore, James Joyce, Seamus O'Kelly, Daniel Corkery, Liam O'Flaherty, Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain, Samuel Beckett, Mary Lavin, Michael McLaverty, John B. Keane and Bryan MacMahon, Patrick Boyle, and John McGahern.

The first essay in the collection, like the second essay in *The Irish Novel in Our Time*, examines the importance of the Gaelic tradition in any consideration of Irish literature in English. Declan Kiberd argues that the short story has flourished in countries like Ireland "where a vibrant oral culture is suddenly challenged by the onset of a sophisticated literary tradition. The short story is the natural result of a fusion between the ancient form of the folk tale and the preoccupations of modern literature." The essay examines the oral story-telling tradition in Gaelic and the various challenges to that tradition, and the culture it reflected, which resulted in the evolution of the Irish short story. In an attempt to explain the remarkable appeal of the short story for Irish writers, the essay echoes Frank O'Connor's observations: "without the concept of a normal society, the novel is impossible; but the short story is particularly appropriate to a society in which revolutionary upheavals have shattered the very idea of normality."

Notwithstanding Professor Kiberd's assertion that George Moore was one of those modern Irish writers immune to the Gaelic tradition, a curious example of the influence of the tradition in its revival stage is discussed in John Cronin's essay on Moore's collection of short stories, *The Untilled Field*, which first appeared in 1902 as *An T-úr-Ghort*. The story of Moore's temporary conversion to Irish is almost as diverting as the story of his other conversion for artistic reasons, to Protestantism, told in his autobiographies, but Professor Cronin's comparison of the Irish and English texts reveals an important part of Moore's general design in *The Untilled Field*. Professor Cronin could have strengthened his argument by noting that even the Irish title of the work fails to tally with the English: *An*

T-úr-Ghort means The Fresh, New or Noble Field; it does not convey the note of neglect contained in the English title.

Maurice Harmon's essay, "First Impressions: 1968-78," provides a useful survey of a somewhat elusive topic, the contemporary Irish short story. His survey begins in 1968, the year in which a national newspaper, "The Irish Press," began to devote a weekly page to contemporary writing in Ireland. This weekly page is directly or indirectly responsible for the appearance of a number of anthologies and individual collections of short stories. On the basis of the evidence in these volumes, Professor Harmon presents a number of tentative conclusions about the new generation of writers. In general, they are not experimentalists in form and narrative technique. Reflecting fundamental changes in Irish society, they are less concerned than their predecessors with the rural scene, revolutionary nationalism and repression of the individual. A more open and tolerant society is reflected in the fact that "The former conflict of man against society, or man against Church, has been replaced by a fluid drama of human interactions and the nuances of the individual's inner life."

The specific essays in the collection are sound and informative and they have the particular virtue of not ignoring or glossing-over the weaknesses of some of the writers they consider. As might be expected, the subject of influence permeates the essays, but the way in which it is treated sometimes raises as many questions as it answers. Professor Cronin states that Moore was "a profoundly important influence" on Irish short story writers from James Joyce to Frank O'Connor. Later in the essay, when he begins to make specific comparisons, he is much more tentative about Moore's influence on Joyce: "[*The Untilled Field*] has often been linked with Joyce's *Dubliners* on which it may have exerted some influence." The question must be asked, particularly in the case of Joyce, what exactly was the nature of Moore's influence. Was Moore a model, "a horrible example," to quote Stephen Dedalus, or a combination of both? Any discussion of this subject must consider the implications of Joyce's remarks on *The Untilled Field.* In a 1905 letter to his brother, Stanislaus, he justified *Dubliners* by stating that "no artist has given [Dublin] to the world." Anticipating the question "What about Moore?", he concluded his letter by adding: "I read that silly, wretched book of Moore's 'The Untilled Field' which the Americans found so remarkable for its 'craftsmanship'. O, dear me! It is very dull and flat, indeed: and ill written." Some of Professor Cronin's conclusions appear to support Joyce's view of the nature of Moore's influence on him: "Moore never attains the disciplined detachment, the authorial objectivity which is Joyce's great strength in *Dubliners* and, as a result, the figures in *The Untilled Field* never

achieve the sharply etched independence of Joyce's most memorable creations. Very few of Moore's characters linger in the memory like Gabriel Conroy or Michael Furey. *The Untilled Field* is overpopulated by intrusive narrators who intervene between us and the characters of the various tales."

The editors are to be congratulated on the fact that the serious proofreading and printing problems in *The Irish Novel in Our Time* have, with one unfortunate exception which appears on the first page of the first article of all places, been eliminated from this volume.

RICHARD WALL

Books Received

FALLON, ANN CONNERTON, *Katherine Tynan.* Twayne's English Authors Series. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1979. pp. 191. $11.95.

FERNS, C. S., *Aldous Huxley: Novelist.* Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980. pp. 240. $36.25.

FLORY, WENDY STALLFARD, *Ezra Pound and The Cantos: A Record of Struggle.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980, pp. xvi, 321. $20.00.

FOLEJEWSKI, ZBIGNIEW, *Futurism and Its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry: A Comparative Study and Anthology.* Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980. pp. xv, 288. $12.00 pb.

GRACE, SHERRILL, *Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood.* Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1980. pp. xiii, 155. $14.95; $5.95 pb.

GREENE, GRAHAM, *Dr. Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party.* London: Bodley Head, 1980. pp. 140. $11.95.

GOTTFRIED, ROY K., *The Art of Joyce's Syntax in Ulysses.* Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1980. pp. 191. $15.00.

HEPBURN, JAMES (ed.), *Arnold Bennett: Sketches for Autobiography.* Winchester, Mass.: Allen & Unwin, 1979. pp. xviii, 182. $17.95.

KAVANAUGH, PETER, *Patrick Kavanaugh: Sacred Keeper.* The Curragh, Co. Kildare: The Goldsmith Press, 1981. pp. 403. $24.00.

KINSELLA, THOMAS, *Poems 1965-73* and *Peppercanister Poems 1972-78.* Winston-Salem, N.C.: Wake Forest University Press, 1979. pp. 192; 159. $10.25; $6.25 pb., $9.95; $5.95 pb.

RAINE, KATHLEEN, *Blake and the New Age.* Winchester, Mass.: Allen & Unwin (Unwin Critical Library), 1979. pp. x, 179. $17.95.

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VAN DER MARK, CHRISTINE, *In Due Season* (introd. Dorothy Livesay). Vancouver: New Star Books, 1979. pp. iv, 372. $14.95; $6.95 pb.