Book Reviews

Joyce Sparer Adler. *War in Melville's Imagination.* New York: New York University Press, 1981. pp. 189. Unpriced.

Joyce Sparer Adler's study of Melville's novels is very impressive and closely-argued within the exploration she conducts of "war-or-peace theme in Melville's work."

One can do no better than quote from the Prelude in which she summarizes objectives that are amply fulfilled in the book as a whole:

> The sustained, underlying theme of *Typee/Omoo* is the contrast between the wars of conquest and occupation of the South Seas by 'white, civilised man' and the tropical peace the nineteenth-century imperialists destroyed. 'War or peace' is the question that unifies *Mardi* and reveals its hidden design, the center around which the particles in *White-Jacket* revolve, the challenge to man's imagination expressed in *Moby Dick*, world literature's symbolic poem of war and peace. *Israel Potter* obliquely asks: What gain was there for the common soldiers and sailors 'exiled' from the benefits won by the American Revolution? *Benito Cereno* makes visible the inseparability of violence and slavery in the Americas, and, by suggestion, of violence and enslavement in the world. The Swiftian grotesque art of the 'Indian-hating' section in the context of *The Confidence-Man* implies how grotesquely the 'history' of the war of extermination waged against the original Americans has been and continues to be told, and for what grim purpose, as well as to what ill effect on the United States. . . . Finally the poetry of *Billy Budd* as a whole . . . intimates the possibility that the question of what war means to humanity may begin to stir in the consciousness of the crew of man and eventually find utterance.

All I shall attempt in a brief review is to touch upon an area of motivation that may run deeper than "war-or-peace" even as it relates to Joyce Adler's thesis.

It is clear from *War in Melville's Imagination* that the tone of Melville's art changes markedly from *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847) to *The Confidence Man* (1857). Within that decade also appear the two towering and ominous fictions *Moby Dick* (1851) and *Benito Cereno* (1855). *The Confidence Man,* I find, pools the

darkness of the bleak masquerade implicit in *Moby Dick* and *Benito Cereno.*

In explaining the darkness that slowly encompasses Melville's fictions, Joyce Adler goes to great pains to rebut notions of evil projected upon the *black* man or upon Indians by a civilization addicted to "Indian-hating" — notions that have been fostered by some Melville scholars — and stresses a different dialectic akin to Swift's that indicts a blind age, blind to the folly of war. Mrs. Adler points through Melville's novels and poems to a civilization "traveling blindly from flawed past to ugly present to catastrophic future" (p. 131).

While unreservedly accepting the justice of this analysis, one may wonder, I feel, whether another complex motivation may not exist in Melville's art to occupy war itself as a mask, a complex even involuntary motivation sprung from what one could tentatively articulate as addiction to paradise.

The paradise of ahistorical or aboriginal age that Melville projects upon Polynesia in his early fictions has faded by the time he comes to the diseased masquerade of *The Confidence Man.* This suggests, I think, firstly that the carnival of paradise has moved into history — into the deprivations that history entails — the malaise of evolving consciousness that masks of history portray. Secondly, that movement is truly, however intuitively or involuntarily, paradisean because of the accent upon a masquerade-in-depth within all cultures that now bear the bitter burden of mutual loss, mutual anguish, mutual horror, as well as terrifying ambiguity of affection, hate woven into love.

The distance between the two conceptions of paradise raises the issue of originality and form beyond comedy-of-manners realism if the artist is to invoke complex, human space in contradistinction to aboriginal, territorial imperative (complex, human space occupied by heterogeneous, cultural perspectives and the inevitable dangers these bring as well as the far-reaching potential benefits and prizes of sensibility). Melville's *Confidence Man,* I find, stops upon a frontier of grave uncertainty, on one hand, and darkened potential, on the other, for an evolution of creative consciousness that may embody random spheres, economic, cultural, religious, etc., into coherence-in-depth.

It is noteworthy that Mrs. Adler — in her significant and expressive chapter on *Moby Dick* — places momentous emphasis on fortress symbolism that would seem to me to mask territorial imperatives. The command of the *Pequod* entails "the shadows that the three whaleboats send down (that) could shade half of Xerxes' army. A waif pole stuck in a killed whale to mark him as the

property of a ship that must temporarily go off is like a nation's flag on newly taken *territory*" (p. 59; italics mine).

In conjunction with this, "the whales, swimming together, are a 'grand armada' " (p. 59) in Ahab's logic.

Indeed, in some degree, as Mrs. Adler shows in closely argued analysis, some of the this fortress symbolism is rooted in Ahab's obsession with waging war on 'life'. Neverthess a pervasive undertone remains beyond the characterization of Ahab to underline Melville's dilemma and torment. For example, I take Mrs. Adler's point that the descent of the *Pequod* into the ocean is followed by a stunning, surreal transformation "symbolic moment... to pictorialize the idea of a transformed and peaceful world" (pp. 75-76). Nevertheless misgivings tend to arise about the subconscious or involuntary symbolism that remains within the climax of events when the novel closes and one finds oneself addressed by a slightly different emphasis arising from the imagery of the passage that Joyce Adler quotes:

> The unharming sharks, *they glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths*....

The effect of the passage is as disturbing as peaceful. The surreal menace of "padlocks on their mouths" is a strange mask upon "unharming sharks," a curious riddle of caged beast. In these ambiguous depths one almost senses the coming shadow of *The Confidence Man*.

War in Melville's Imagination is an important book that adds to the quality and range of inquiry into Melville's genius. One of its merits is the supreme conviction with which it is written that leaves open nevertheless, I think, a capacity for dialogue and differing emphasis between critic and reader.

London WILSON HARRIS

Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979. pp. 257. $17.50.

Of course the word "fantasy" was not a critical term in the nineteenth century; indeed, handbooks and dictionaries of literary terms did not cite the word until the recent *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (ed. Roger Fowler, 1973). However, now that the word has received critical sanction much of what had previously been thought of as fairy tale, Gothic novel, romantic poem, Pre-Raphaelite poem, nonsense, or romance can now conveniently slip into the new genre: Fantasy. The difficulty arises in defining the genre, as readers of Colin Manlove's *Modern Fantasy* (1975) or

Eric Rabkin's *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976) (compare these writers' fantasies with those of Norman Holland) will realize. What is a "Fantasy"? Stephen Prickett, in this important introduction to the study of nineteenth-century popular literature, seems to sense the difficulties of definition. His use of "fantasy" carries generic, psychologic, and philosophic meanings; fantasy, through "a variety of non-realistic techniques that included nonsense, dreams, visions, and the creation of other worlds," extends and enriches our "ways of perceiving 'reality'," and it also gives "scope to man's deepest dreams and most potent ideas." Consequently, fantasy, in Prickett's book, describes as much a sensibility as a form. We have neither a formal nor a generic view of fantasy, nor one that traces a tradition through the nineteenth century and on into our own time. Instead, the book breaks down into chapters that attempt to scan the philosophic, psychologic, and aesthetic ideas and feelings of the period from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. The intent is to trace a "counter-tradition" to the "classical ideal of nineteenth-century realism."

From a theoretical and historical perspective such an attempt is bound to leave gaps. As Prickett himself notes: "Anyone who begins a discussion of Victorian Fantasy with Horace Walpole and ends with Edith Nesbit and Rudyard Kipling may plausibly be accused of being overambitious." The ambition is praiseworthy and the effort noble; Prickett's range of reference is impressive, his handling of cultural and philosophic generalities is nice, and his descent into close readings is illuminating. *Victorian Fantasy* is a fine beginning on a subject that deserves further study.

But let's look briefly at the history of fantasy presented here. Prickett begins with the Gothic revival in the eighteenth century, with Walpole and Beckford, two writers whose work (and lives) reflect an "atmosphere of dream, wishful thinking, unconscious shadow desire and reverie." There is a tradition here, but it is one not examined by Prickett: the gothic flame passing from 'Monk' Lewis through such Victorian writers as Collins, LeFanu, Mrs. Riddell, Rider Haggard, and of course Bram Stoker. By itself the gothic cannot account for such writers as Sara Coleridge, George Meredith, or George MacDonald (the first two, significantly, are not mentioned in *Victorian Fantasy*).

Perhaps I am unfair. Prickett's first chapter has the title, "The Evolution of a Word" and it chronicles the change in meaning of the word 'fantasy' in the one hundred and fifty years from 1750 to 1900. In the late eighteenth century, we learn, the word "fantasy" "signified a kind of imagination one might expect to find in madmen — or in children. In 1825 something very extraordinary had happened. From being terms of derision, or descriptions of day

dreaming, words like 'fantasy' and 'imagination' suddenly began to take on new status as hurrah-words." Naturally the meaning had not entirely changed as an example from Arnold, to the effect that the "great vice of our intellect . . . is that it is fantastic and wants sanity," reveals. But the change *was* in process as Prickett notes. His first two examples are Coleridge and Carlyle, although for some reason not entirely clear to me poor Carlyle receives a reprimand because his word "fantasy" while not meaning the same as Coleridge's "imagination" yet stretches to sublime import. "Fantasy" must not overreach; it is humble, more akin to play (and perhaps madness) than to divination or revelation. It is the "underside, or obverse, of the Victorian imagination," often related to madness (Jonathan Martin, Richard Dadd, John Ruskin) or to the sublimation of instincts that could drive one mad (Lear and Carroll).

This is portentous. But we ought to give Carlyle his due. To say, as Prickett does, that in Carlyle's use of "fantasy" in *Sartor Resartus* "all is subjective" is to over state. There is and must be a difference between madness and inspiration (we must look to Book 3, Chapter 8 of *Sartor* — the "Natural Supernaturalism" chapter, not noted in *Victorian Fantasy* — for Carlyle's definition of madness), although as MacDonald often shows they can be confused. Carlyle's notion that fantasy is essentially symbolic and hence represents a truth beyond the material is essential to fantasy as it develops in the nineteenth century, and he, like Coleridge before him, derived this sense of fantasy not from Walpole and the gothic revival, but from German romantic writers, especially Fichte, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegal; and from the *Volksmärchen* as represented in the tales of the brothers Grimm (first published in English in 1823). Certainly, for a writer like Novalis fantasy is closer to *Vernuft* than to *Verstand.* Or, if a more familiar voice might help, fantasy comes to stand for reason in her most exalted mood. In form, works like Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen,* Goethe's *Das Märchen,* Hoffmann's *Der goldne Topf,* or Fouque's *Undine* are symbolic medleys, what Novalis calls — in a passage cited by MacDonald as epigraph to *Phantastes — eine Musikalische Phantasie.* Both in form and idealism, the work of Sara Coleridge (*Phantasmion,* 1837), George Meredith (*Farina,* 1857, and perhaps *The Shaving of Shagpat,* 1855, although this wild fantasy owes much to the *Arabian Knights*), George MacDonald (*Phantastes,* 1858, and other works), Jean Ingelow (*Mopsa the Fairy,* 1869), H. G. Wells (*The Sea Lady,* 1902, and many short stories), W. H. Hodgson, and Lord Dunsany derives much from the German Romantic writers and their English counterparts, Coleridge and Carlyle. What we need is a study of this tradition in order to balance the notion that fantasy is "irrational."

For a number of Victorian female writers of fantasy — Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Molesworth, Mrs. Craik, Mary DeMorgan, none of whom receive notice in *Victorian Fantasy* — the form is educative and appropriate for children because its mode of reasoning is closer to the child's than the adult's. The child learns about himself and his world through fantasy; fantasy is a way of thinking closer to a poetic process than it is to discursive thought. As George MacDonald says (speaking of dialect in literature, but his words are appropriate here), "the child way of saying must always lie nearer the child way of seeing, which is the poetic way." The reason that the work of such female fantasists (Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno* might be added here) dissatisfies is that the writers, ultimately, do not trust poetic logic; consequently, they begin to undermine it with explanation and to locate it in pre-pubescent childhood.

What all this amounts to is: much remains to be done in the study of Victorian fantasy. But Prickett is aware of this and we ought not to quibble over what he has left out; rather we must praise what he has accomplished. The book offers several original and what must now be indispensable readings of several writers. Most impressive is Prickett's scrutiny of Edward Lear's nonsense verse. The "*emotional* logic" of the limericks and nonsense poems is brilliantly explained as a reflection of Lear's loneliness and restlessness, and his sense of being an outsider. This is Prickett's usual method: to relate the fantasist's work to his life and times. It also works well with Kingsley whose *The Water Babies* receives perhaps its most sympathetic and sensitive reading to date. Prickett illustrates "that unity of extravagant inconsistencies" which informs the book. The discussion of George MacDonald complements Prickett's previous consideration of MacDonald in *Romanticism and Religion* (1976), covering much the same ground but adding a closer scrutiny of *Lilith*.

Many niggling things call for notation in *Victorian Fantasy*. When Prickett says that "instead of arousing gratitude and admiration in those" Diamond (in *At the Back of the North Wind*) has helped, he "merely produces contempt," we must reply: "Hasty! Not so! Remember the drunken cabman." Similar slips occur throughout the text. What proof, for example, is there that the poet, Shelley, "after a wild and dissolute career" committed suicide? And certainly, he was not twenty-six when he drowned off Lerici. At one point in *Victorian Fantasy*, Prickett asserts that "the painter is not bound to social reality as is the worker in words." Yet the sentences that follow deal with the poet, Keats, and assert that there is "little evidence" of urban life, of social reality in his poems: "For the most part Keats choses (*sic*) quite explicitly to set his poetry in another world. . . . Only occasionally, as in *Isabella*, do we

get a glimpse of a familiar capitalistic and imperial industrial system." The printing error in this passage is not unique in the book. There are several misquoted passages (e.g., from Newman: "even clocks tell a different to be said to think"), and several misspellings (e.g., "bonbs" for bombs, "tht" for that, and "it" for to). Now and again a hastily turned sentence intrudes: "In the Frankenstein tradition his hideous outward appearance means that he has become a highly unpleasant character, and with Nesbit's socialist tendencies in mind it comes as no surpise to learn that this monster is a 'well-known city man', Mr. U. W. Ugli." Despite such infelicities, *Victorian Fantasy* is an important study, and it will undoubtedly generate further work on an unjustly neglected area of Victorian literature.

RODERICK MCGILLIS

Ted Morgan. Maugham: A Biography. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980. pp. 711. $23.95.

When William Somerset Maugham drew up his will eighteen months before his death in 1965, he instructed his literary executor, Spencer Curtis Brown, to refuse to co-operate with any potential biographer and to refuse permission for the publication of any of his letters. In part, this injunction arose from Maugham's characteristic Edwardian reticence about exposing the details of his own life; more than that however, he dreaded public revelations — even after his death — of his homosexuality. For fifteen years, Spencer Curtis Brown dutifully discouraged any attempt at a full-scale biography, though he could not, of course, prevent publication of such memoirs as Beverley Nichols' *A Case of Human Bondage*, Robin Maugham's *Somerset and All the Maughams* and *Escape From the Shadows*, or Garson Kanin's *Remembering Mr. Maugham.*

In his efforts to guard his client's privacy, Mr. Brown was supported by two of Maugham's survivors, both of whom had their own reasons for wanting his story suppressed. His only child, Liza (now Lady Glendevon), had endured a nasty and humiliating public quarrel with her father in 1962, when she sued for a share of the proceeds from the sale of his substantial art collection. In the course of a year-long battle, fulsomely reported by the press, Maugham variously charged that Liza was not in fact his daughter but the child of one of his wife's many lovers, attacked his late wife in an unsavoury autobiographical piece serialized in the *Sunday Express*, and attempted to adopt as his son his private secretary of thirty-five years, Alan Searle. Searle, after devoting his life to Maugham as his secretary and lover, suffered a nervous breakdown

after the horrible years of Maugham's senility and dying, and adopted a policy of not talking or writing about his life with Maugham.

For a decade after Maugham's death, a number of scholarly biographers were discouraged by Mr. Brown, Lady Glendevon, and Alan Searle. In fact, even writers of academic studies of Maugham's writing were denied permission to quote excerpts from certain of his works. In 1979, however, Ted Morgan (an Americanized Frenchman formerly known as Sanche de Gramont) succeeded in persuading Brown that, having written half a manuscript, he was going to publish and be damned. A few months before his death, Brown agreed to lift the restriction on the use of copyright material, and he went so far as to persuade Lady Glendevon to co-operate with Morgan in the writing of the final chapters of her father's life. Alan Searle, however, concerned that Morgan's book would be another journalistic account, refused to participate. In a conversation in March of 1977, he assured me that he no longer had any objections to a biography, but he wanted it to be a scholarly and sensitive study.

If Spencer Curtis Brown and Lady Glendevon believed that Ted Morgan's book would finally present a full, accurate, and understanding picture of Maugham's life, they surely cannot be satisfied with the result. It is true that *Maugham: A Biography* puts more facts about the writer's life between two covers than have previously been printed in book form, and that there are numerous glimpses into Maugham's correspondence, previously available only to a select few in various libraries and institutions. The book is disappointing, however, as biography — at least in the sense of biography as written by such scholars as Leon Edel, Michael Holyroyd, and Phyllis Grosskurth.

Morgan's "biography" is 619 pages of gossip, trivia, clichés, and pastiche of earlier books and reminiscences, devoid of anything but the most superficial kind of analytical comment. His technique is to string together excerpts from Maugham's letters, frequent paraphrases from them (which always miss Maugham's light ironic touch and thus convert his observations into heavy-handed sarcasm), published remarks of his contemporaries, potted period descriptions to provide "atmosphere," and various comments gleaned from interviews. What is lacking, however, is any real effort to understand what this raw material means and to give it an intelligent shape which would present an interpretation of the man. This lack of synthesis frequently produces inconsistencies within Morgan's account as one part will cite one reference authoritatively while the opposite view will be presented with equal conviction elsewhere. In doing this, Morgan is not above attacking the motives

and veracity of writers such as Robin Maugham or Beverley Nichols in one section and then quoting them as trustworthy witnesses throughout the remainder of the book.

The real problem with this book is that, at heart, Morgan dislikes his subject, and he has not let his massive amount of material digest long enough to give him a real understanding of the nature of the man. Thus, though this is the most explicit treatment in print of Maugham's homosexuality, Morgan concentrates always on the nasty, procuring side of Maugham's homosexual life. At no time does he ever recognize that a homosexual relationship might be supportive, sensitive, loving, and compassionate. As a result, all the melodramatic stories about Gerald Haxton are trotted out again, and Alan Searle, whose unselfish devotion to the ageing writer in the difficult final years has been praised by all those who knew Maugham, is unfairly treated as a devious self-seeking sycophant. In the case of Searle, Morgan accepts without question the observations of Lord and Lady Glendevon, while quoting Searle from material passed on to him by a Patrick O'Higgins, who is supposed to have interviewed Searle a number of years ago. The dubious nature of this information has been confirmed by a number of people who, since the appearance of Morgan's book, have written to various publications to deny that they ever witnessed what they are described as having seen.

No one could argue that "Willie" Maugham's life provided the raw material for an affectionate biography of a warm and generous man, nor will he ever be a fascinating subject because of creative brilliance as an artist. He does, however, deserve better than he has been given at the hands of Morgan. The longstanding, and inaccurate public view of him as a malicious and bitter old toad must eventually be replaced by a portrait which recognizes his sensitivity, loyalty, and numerous kindnesses to many people. The story of his homosexuality and what his guilt about it did to him as a man and as a writer needs eventually to be explored in depth — if only because in doing so it will explain much about a generation of homosexual writers whose lives were forever traumatized by the Wilde trial. And finally, the relationship between his remarkable popular success in the novel, play, short story, and essay, and the man himself will need to be analyzed and explained. Perhaps now that Morgan has exposed the worst of Maugham, the way will at last be clear for a study which will illuminate the best.

University of Saskatchewan ROBERT L. CALDER

W. J. Keith. *The Poetry of Nature: rural perspectives in poetry from Wordsworth to the present.* University of Toronto Press, 1980. pp. xi, 219. $20.00.

For this study of the poetry of nature, which complements his earlier study of prose writers, *The Rural Tradition*, W. J. Keith chooses two epigraphs. The first is from Wordsworth, with whom he begins and whose influence he traces throughout the rest of the book: "O many are the poets that are sown / By Nature." The second is from Reuben A. Brower (*The Poetry of Robert Frost: Constellations of Intention*): "A poet does not stand in the presence of natural facts alone, he stands also in the presence of other poets of nature and their poems." These two quotations define the main concerns of this honest and finely written book: on the one hand, Professor Keith is concerned with the personal, individual response of poets to their experience of the natural world; on the other hand, he is concerned with a literary tradition, which he sees as starting with Wordsworth and continuing to the present, no longer as the main stream in poetry, but as a "natural process" and a living tradition nonetheless, and not as a merely derivative concern with dead conventions. "Indeed," he argues in his introductory chapter, "the relation of the human mind to all that exists outside it, the connection between interior and exterior landscapes, the inseparable links between man and his environment, all these are matters of central importance to the modern consciousness."

Starting with Wordsworth, the book goes on to consider John Clare, William Barnes, Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost and Edward Thomas, and — more briefly in the final chapter — Edmund Blunden, Andrew Young and R. S. Thomas. For readers accustomed to rigid period distinctions, or to a separation between "major" and "minor" writers, this mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar will be fresh and unexpected. Professor Keith defines the poetry of nature not simply as descriptive poetry but as poetry concerned with the relationship between man and nature, in which nature offers the poet a "dramatic challenge." He therefore chooses not to consider the nature poetry of the eighteenth century, in which the poet plays the role of observer and in which the human response to landscape is conventionalized, not discovered in the process of reading the poem. A new emphasis on personal experience demands from poets a familiarity with the details of country life, a concern with the particularity and variety of experience, a sense of specific locality. From the critic, such an emphasis obviously demands careful and subtle attention to details in the verse, and the kind of sensibility that can not only see similarities among different poems but can also discriminate among poems that might seem merely similar to a more careless reader. Keith's study of the influence of

Wordsworth on the later poets he discusses is always more than just a study of influence, because he offers the reader insight into the unique qualities of each of his poets. Wordsworth is the starting point, perhaps the focus, of this study; but he is shown to be the beginning of a tradition or a line of development, and not merely a standard by which others can be judged.

Perhaps because of the emphasis on particularity in *The Poetry of Nature*, little is said about convention or older generic traditions. If the reader wants to discover allusions to Virgil or Spenser, or a reworking of traditional symbolism, fine; but the book will not help him to do so. Keith is not concerned to discuss John Clare in terms of his connection with pastoral conventions or archetypal symbolism, and his distrust of "symbolic baggage" gives the book its main strengths — a complete honesty in the face of each poet and poem, and an attention to language and technique that goes well beyond arguing a general thesis. *The Poetry of Nature* does have an argument, and a strong, interesting one. But it presents it through specific example, allowing the poems to speak for themselves. On the other hand, Professor Keith also responds positively to poetry that makes a more general statement, as his discussion of Edward Thomas' "Lob" and his disagreement with Raymond Williams' indictment of this poem in *The Country and the City* demonstrate: even this poem is "steeped in a specific area of Wiltshire," and depends on authentic observation rather than the sentimental, imperialistic patriotism Williams criticizes it for. Throughout the book, Keith's treatment of the scholarship and criticism of others is discreet and tactful: the background is all there — biographical, critical, scholarly — but it does not obtrude into the foreground, properly occupied by the poetry itself. Because Keith's book, like any other work of criticism, takes on some of the qualities of its subject — in this case particularly, variety, and perhaps an occasional temptation to formlessness — the author often controls his discussion by alluding to the work of other critics and then getting on with some less familiar text or point. The book is challenging and original, but for the most part it avoids direct critical debate. None of the poets are discussed as exponents of a system, and the book itself is less concerned with critical stances than with the analysis of language and poetic technique. Professor Keith emphasizes Wordsworth's influence as poet rather than as thinker: "... his experiments in structure and perspective were taken over by later poets event when the 'message' embodied in their work was fundamentally anti-Wordsworthian." This influence of Wordsworth as poet rather than natural philosopher is demonstrated most clearly in Keith's discussion of Hardy and of R. S. Thomas.

Poetic perspective is particularly important in this book, as the subtitle suggests: perhaps the variety of points of view is one of the most striking characteristics of the poetry of nature. The poet is rarely a detached observer — though Keith argues that Hardy dramatizes "discontinuity between man and his environment" by means of a detached narrative stance. More often the narrative voice is that of a dramatic character participating in the world he describes. Professor Keith emphasizes Wordsworth's experiments with dramatic monologue (notably "The Thorn") and other poems that raise questions about the relationship between narrator and poet: "Michael," "Resolution and Independence," even "Tintern Abbey," which — though autobiographical — presents a carefully selected narrative voice. The most extended discussion of a single Wordsworth poem is the section on "The Ruined Cottage," where Keith demonstrates how the role of the interpreter is divided between the Wanderer and the narrator-Poet.

Wordsworth is most concerned with the effect of landscape on man: in this sense his poetry is most obviously the poetry of human nature. But Keith shows that nature itself may be the real subject for other poets. Clare's most usual perspective, for example, is that of observer from within, writing from an intimate knowledge of what is being described and sometimes even becoming one with the subject of the poem, as in "Clock-a-clay." In the case of many of Clare's poems and of those of Edward Thomas, there may be no need for a persona and the poet may address his reader directly. The unifying feature in all this variety of perspective seems to be the sense of place itself, "the triumph of earth" as Professor Keith calls it in the title of the final section of his chapter on Edward Thomas. He contrasts the natural world of the tradition he is writing about with the more familiar image of the twentieth century: the waste land. In his conclusion he sees the urban and intellectual poetry of Eliot and Pound as obscuring another tradition, given a bad name by the derivative nature poetry of many of the Georgians, but still alive in the late twentieth century as a tradition that goes beyond derivative nostalgia and romanticism and has a real place in an urban and environmentally anxious world.

The Poetry of Nature is a model of clarity and economy of language. Its readings of individual poems are fresh and helpful, and the discussion of influence and relationship among writers is so skilfully handled that it is possible to read individual chapters by themselves without losing the thread of the argument. The introductory chapter, in which a few poems by different poets are juxtaposed and compared, is an excellent introduction to the method of the book as a whole. This is a book that insists that we listen very carefully to the language of poetry, that we observe in detail shifts

in perspective and subtle distinctions of form and rhythm and colour. In this sense, it is a book that reflects faithfully something of the detail and discrimination of the actual poetry it analyzes and describes. The poet's relationship to the natural world in the poetry of nature finds its counterpart here in the critic's relationship to his texts.

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