

## Book Reviews

Annabel M. Patterson. *Marvell and the Civic Crown*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. pp. x + 264, 7 plates. \$16.00.

Annabel Patterson's book reiterates the thesis expounded in her recent article, "Against Polarization: Literature and Politics in Marvell's Cromwell Poems" (*ELR*, 1975, 251-72). The work is basically an apologia for Marvell's political writings: panegyrics, satires, and controversial prose. It is the author's contention that these pieces reflect "the same qualities of generic self-consciousness and inventiveness, the same redeployments of old topoi in intelligent new configurations . . . found in Marvell's 'garden' lyrics" (p. 7). In this approach, she rejects the predominant critical view, best epitomized by Pierre Legouis' assumption that the poet's later works, which focus on political themes, generally lack the aesthetic innocence, the ironic metaphysical wit and the intellectual delicacy of the early poems. It is significant in this respect that Rosalie Colie, in her brilliant study, "*My Echoing Song*": *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism* (1970), appears to condemn the poet's impure aesthetic in his political writing by her great silence about the subject.

Professor Patterson also contends that the remarkable shifts in Marvell's genre or style can be attributed to changes in his political environment, and that he is actively aware of the different demands of different genres. This leads her to elaborate discussion of the social, ethical, and political functions of literature in an era where the theory of "art for art's sake" was almost inconceivable. It is true that Marvell believed in the contemporary critical conception of poetry as a medium of "delightful instruction", designed to "move", "delight", and "teach" the reader (*docere, delectare et movere*). Undoubtedly he believed profoundly in the classical ideal of rhetoric as a politically significant force to sway the minds of his audience. It is also true that modern readers, with their "dissociation of sensibility", have a tendency for classification and polarization, which may cause them to split Marvell into two men, the poet and the political thinker, instead of perceiving the various facets of his personality as one integrated whole which is the man himself.

Nevertheless, while allowing due weight to Marvell's skill as a literary craftsman, it is difficult to accept the view that his later pieces of explicit, sometimes clumsy, political propaganda have the same merit, in terms of aesthetic subtlety and artistic sophistication, as the pastorals, the love lyrics or the *carpe diem* poems. It would be futile, for instance, to compare "The Garden" with, say, "On the Victory obtained by Blake over the Spaniards". Indeed Professor Patterson's discussion of the political pieces is arguably more persuasive than the poems themselves. Her ambitious and enthusiastic attempt to uncover their complexity does not convince me that they have great literary value. By virtue of their temporal nature and impure source, they remain more timely than timeless, more individual than universal.

The Cromwell poems are basically "situational" pieces, in which Marvell conveys his political sympathies, with the main emphasis on the absolute uniqueness of his hero. Cromwell is portrayed as an austere patriot of the early Roman breed, as both the invincible military leader and the Machiavellian intrigant, as the master politician who holds the discordant elements of the state together through sheer force of will. Treating him again and again as God's elected agent, Marvell tends to downplay Cromwell's mortality and to endow him with almost superhuman powers. He simply assumes that the Protector (Saviour?) has God on his side and that his intentions are always honourable. In this preoccupation with political activism, Marvell is no longer the sensitive poet fascinated by the processes of his own mind and art. The later poems are, more or less, dominated by the attempt to indoctrinate readers through exaggerated terms and platitudes, which will not stand the test of severe thought.

The question of the "civic crown" and of Cromwell's proper relationship to the institution of monarchy is one of Marvell's central concerns in "The First Anniversary of the Government Under O.C.," to which Professor Patterson deftly addresses herself (pp. 68-90 and *passim*). She lays great emphasis on the hypothetical nature of the poem, asserting that in it Marvell gives full expression to his belief that "no conventional category, and certainly not that of kingship, was adequate to delimit the 'One Man' whose like had never been seen before" (p. 70). In my view, it is distasteful in "The First Anniversary" that the poet adopts Biblical typology to represent Cromwell as the divinely appointed instrument of God's providence. In the bald references to Elijah or Gideon, Marvell unwittingly reduces Biblical characters and events to the status of contemporary politics. It is possible, however, that he is thinking in terms of Christian determinism, based on the assumption that the triumph of the Puritan Revolution represents a glorious era of human history which foreshadows the reign of Christ on earth.

But even this line of thinking can hardly justify the movement from the sublime to the trivial in his account of Cromwell's accident in Hyde Park as a type of the Fall, complete with a reference to the "stupid Tree". Thus the Protector becomes a type of Adam in his fall and a type of the second Adam in his rise; Cromwell is first cast down by the sinfulness of his countrymen and then rises again in glory. Such naive and uninteresting propaganda verges on the absurd, notwithstanding Professor Patterson's eloquent defence. The Cromwell poems, in fact, abound in similar artificial and extrinsic devices used as a bait to entice the reader in the process of persuasion.

Finally, in spite of my total disagreement with Annabel Patterson's basic assumptions, I find her book illuminating and provocative. There is in it a wealth of biographical and historical data which offers the reader a vivid picture of Marvell's political career. The material is well-ordered, lucidly and gracefully expressed, and amply but never excessively or pedantically supported by references. Besides, the book reflects a refreshing spirit of intellectual humility.

Saad El-Gabalawy

Roland Mushat Frye. *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. pp. xxvi + 408; 261 black and white illus., 8 colour. \$37.50.

Professor Roland Mushat Frye in his "Introduction" to *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts* states disarmingly his encyclopedic purpose:

My purpose here is to study the ways in which artists represented the scenes, events, and characters that Milton treats poetically in his epic works. Over the centuries prior to Milton's time, the arts had developed an extensive vocabulary of visual imagery relating to sacred subjects. Unfortunately, that vocabulary has been very largely lost to modern readers. (p. 4)

Professor Frye proceeds to indicate the depth, comprehensiveness, and subtlety which an adequate encyclopedic survey of these visual images requires: after quoting Douglas Bush, "Milton and his early readers knew the Bible and the common classics far better than we do and were far more likely to use and to catch overtones from both sources," Professor Frye extends this necessity for recognizing allusions to the necessity for understanding those conventions of "visual imagery relating to sacred subjects" that were familiar to Milton and his audience and that ceased to be familiar a century or so after Milton's death. Thus the visual images that sculptors, painters, and engravers had used to describe the "indescribable" (to recall one of Samuel Johnson's objections to Milton's epics) supplied Milton and his contemporaneous audience with a "visual lexicon" that made possible "economy" of exposition and contributed to "overtones and undertones of irony and ambiguity," to the "density and depth" of Milton's poetic treatment of Heaven and Hell.

Disarming, straightforward, and unexceptionable as this statement of purpose is, the task which it outlines is staggering; and there are further seemingly endless incidental increments, particularly the necessity of disposing of more than two centuries of critical and scholarly objections, from Johnson through T.S. Eliot, to Milton's treatment of sacred subjects and especially of the war in Heaven. These incidental increments might well have sunk the entire effort in a morass of neo-scholastic "coverage" of secondary sources, many of them of only tangential pertinence. Professor Frye maintains not only a sure sense of direction throughout the entire work, but is more than fair, indeed positively generous in most instances, to the critics and scholars whom he cites. Frye's coverage of images related to sacred subjects found in painting, mosaic, sculpture, wood carving, and book illustration is admirable; and the conclusions at which he arrives concerning images which Milton chose for his epic do convincingly demonstrate that much adverse critical comment on Milton's epic representations of Christian narrative has proceeded from abysmal ignorance of the iconographic conventions which Milton shared with his predecessors and contemporaries.

These conclusions also differentiate among the images which Milton chose for different parts of his epics and throw light on some problems which other and purely literary criticism has left generally dark. As Frye points out,

. . . what he [Milton] chose to use from that lexicon [of conventional visual images] is no more important than what he chose to ignore, and indeed the one can scarcely be understood apart from the other.

Milton's visual selectivity was governed by his own epic and religious intentions, rather than by any allegiance to any artist, or studio, or even school, and his descriptions correspond with motifs drawn from every period, sect, and artistic medium, while some were entirely original with him. We find here the same eclecticism which characterized his thought in every field. (p. 348)

Thus Milton's angels move as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pictures of angels indicate that they move, but the scenes of angels seated on thrones correspond to conventions from fifteenth-century art; and the prostration of the fallen angels before Satan is Milton's own invention for contrasting the tyranny of Satan's Hell with the dignity of God's Heaven. Often in illustrating the several traditions and Milton's use of them, Frye suggests though he does not spell out possible explanations for Milton's poetic inventions. For example, in *Paradise Regained* Milton invents the cultivated but incipiently sybaritic banquet scene and its temptations—Satan's perennial specious appeal to cynical "honesty"—Satan in effect, that is, also asks Christ to admit that civilized life and standards of behavior are after all available only through the worldly privilege which Satan offers. Here Milton seems to anticipate and reject the idea stated in the twentieth century by T.S. Eliot that the only guardians of cultural excellence inevitably must be an hereditary specially privileged aristocracy. Thus the banquet temptation is another form of the temptation of power—the speciousness and falsity of assuming that moral action can depend upon worldly power, or cultural excellence upon human learning *per se*, or upon civilized manners.

Professor Frye has conveniently included in the margins references to the 269 reproductions which he includes, and clear references in the text to the location of materials which he does not include. This book is first of all a valuable contribution to Milton studies. It analyzes Milton's use of visual images in his epic poetry; and in the process of that analysis Frye disposes of much secondary lumber and aesthetic nonsense. The book is also a contribution to intellectual history, to the study of iconology in the seventeenth century, and a triumph of common sense and wisdom, which here subsume "scholarly" methods.

I am sorry to conclude this review with a negative note but must observe that for a large art book that has an excellent text with fine illustrations and is intended for a purpose much more serious than lying on a coffee table, this book is poorly bound. The hinges could not stand up to one careful reading; and surely one should be able to read a \$37.50 book through at least once without damaging the binding. A University Press as distinguished as Princeton's is for its scholarship should take more pride in its craftsmanship.

Don E. Ray

V.S. Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Vintage Books. New York: Random House, 1977. pp. 191. \$2.95.

"India is for me a difficult country. It is not my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far." These words of V.S. Naipaul,

who visits the country of his ancestors for the fourth time, in the foreword to his new novel, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, show his fascination with a world that continues to defy him. In reviewing his earlier book, *An Area of Darkness*, I wrote "Let it be said at once that Naipaul, who visited India sixty years after his maternal grandfather left as an indentured labourer for Trinidad, has written a readable but negative book about India, disappointing if one reads it as a guide to India". I tend to hold a similar opinion on *India: A Wounded Civilization*. In my meeting with him in 1970, which lasted over a long dinner at Kingston, this small, wary, scintillating conversationalist, himself a little wounded-looking, told me that he was greatly impressed with the progress that India was making as he had visited her during a general election. He gleefully narrated his enjoyment in reading Nirad Chaudhuri's article "Why I Hate Indians" in *The Illustrated Weekly* published about 1969. I got the impression that he had changed his views on India since he wrote *An Area*. He is obsessed with India, I thought. He said to me "My Indian memories, the memories of that India which lived into my childhood in Trinidad, are like trap doors into a bottomless pit." He seemed very Indian, every inch an Upan. India lived in his artistic consciousness; the India of dirt and squalor had provided him with the milieu for a novel. The names of his several characters are Indian in origin. Ganesh Ramsumanir, Chittaranjan, Mohun Biswas, Ralph Singh; and the Hindu Gods, Hanuman, Ganesh, Goddess Lakshmi and the reformers such as the Mahathma and Vinoba flit across the pages of his novels. The metaphor is India and her complex civilization. It is India that he loved and hated. When he cherished such love-hate relations, I wonder why there was no serious attempt to understand her. Why was she to him a shattering world, a broken civilization? To him her past is inglorious and her present detestable.

*India: A Wounded Civilization* is a kind of novel-biography. The book deals with his most recent visit in 1975 to his ancestral land during the most inauspicious times. It was the time of the Emergency, a short anarchical period. Earlier, over a span of fourteen years, he had made three extended visits. He is continuously in touch with some literature of India, he refers to R.K. Narayan very warmly. Recently he seems to have seen and read about the ruins of Vijayanagar; he seems to know the plays of Vijay Tendulkar, the work of Dr. Sudhir Kakar, a psychotherapist of the Jawaharlal Nehru University; A.K. Ramanujan's translation of U.R. Ananthamurthy's novel, *Samskara*; he comments on the work of the Mysore University English Department. He writes in pain about the post-colonial developments, the old feudalism giving way to new anarchy. India also becomes a mirror in which the writer sees himself as a displaced person in a world where imperialism is broken, democracy is flawed, class-ridden and suffused with hypocrisy. While discussing and pondering the underlying patterns of thought and perceptions of Hinduism, he falls into the usual misunderstanding of a superficial Western writer. He describes the doctrine of *Karma* as "the Hindu killer, the Hindu calm, which tells us that we pay in life for what we have done in past lives; so that everything we see is just and balanced, and the distress we see is to be realised as religious theatre . . ." In the light of this half-understanding of the doctrine of *Karma*, he attacks Indian moral smugness. Naipaul sees the crippling effect on social endeavours of the "fatalistic" ideology. Tripping around India, finding himself no different in appearance from most of the people he passes in the street, a faceless member of a crowd, he turns for security to misconceptions of *Karma* and to the fashionable morbidity which destroys radical hope or original intelligence. He

turns also to the novel, a form which relieves him of the necessity for a serious exploration of tradition.

Much as I like Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* I would never identify it under a Caribbean tradition. I would be wary of bias. Yet that is how Naipaul comes to terms in an Indian tradition through a handful of naturalistic novels written by Indians largely for foreign consumption. Perhaps in the latter half of the twentieth century, it is fashionable to pass off as a cultural relativist by judging a society by standards which manufacture best-selling fodder. Following the fashionable line, Naipaul writes off India's whole civilization as wounded. Like most intellectuals, he experienced pain during the Emergency. The stifling atmosphere of the Emergency and his sharp eye for the Indian trait of not viewing society as a whole makes him write prose which flows from intensely anxious communion with himself. Behind this is the sense of displacement — born in Trinidad he studied in Oxford and now lives in London — which has made him relate to every landscape — Caribbean, African, Indian, English — without inner vision.

In India, he says, "I am a stranger." India seems to defy him. The more she defies him, the more is he obsessed with her. In *A Wounded Civilization* he is more relentless and self-revealing than in *An Area*. On a previous occasion he made a visit to his grandparent's village in Uttar Pradesh: it was not a pilgrimage but the experience was stultifying. Thirteen years later, after writing a number of novels, a maturer and a wiser man returns to find India again a country which disturbs him. India is wounded, but still Narayan's words, uttered in 1961, that "India will go on" ring in his ears. This time he visits the ruins in Vijayanagar, goes to the dam across the Tungabhadra river and he is aware of India's achievements in education and agriculture, but still he says, "The crisis of India is not only political or economic. The larger crisis of a wounded civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead."

To me, it seems the basic misconception arises from the expatriate's inability to understand Indians in terms of the deepest cultural values. Talking about Hinduism with reference to the ruins of Vijayanagar, he says it decays into barbarism. In this way, it seems to me, he disguises his own inadequacy to explore the roots of tradition, how Hinduism belongs to the past yet is relevant to the present. It is true that India has borrowed ideas from other cultures, but this has involved her in a far-reaching dialogue that enriches others in the West and in the Third World. Naipaul does not seem to get this from the books he has read, for the books he has read are stories. India is not a story or an allegory but is a living country. Naipaul reminds me of one of his own characters, the displaced Mohun Biswas of the Tulsi House in *A House for Mr. Biswas*. He is obsessed with national character but in a country like India national character is self-deceiving. India is too vast and diverse to be "nationalistic" and never has been. Her ordeal is of a religious and social dimension, a dimension of community. Her ordeal is a grave one but it needs to be judged against the technological hubris of the west and the authoritarian hubris of communism or fascism. Such criteria of judgement are not easily formulated and are not to be found in Naipaul's books.

Likewise his analysis of Gandhi makes me think that this clever man is trying to be too clever. Of late, it has become a fashion with some of our writers living in the West — Ved Mehta is an example — to denigrate

Gandhi. To Naipaul Gandhi is a failure because he helped achieve Independence for India but he failed to achieve the reformation of a generation of Hindu society. He criticises Gandhi for failing to leave behind an ideology. He is unfair to Gandhi and to his immense efforts in propounding a political ideology beyond the comprehension of Naipaul. The Mahatma and Vinoba Bhave are the Himalayas; they have their place in India.

I have always admired Naipaul's clear, lucid writing. Like Forster, he raises two questions: "what is personality" and "what is reality". Unlike Forster he is unable to see that the modern world is an age of complex transition and "personality" and "reality" may mean nothing more than what one brings to the struggle oneself by way of genuine intuition and genuine passion.

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## Books Received

- CLEVER, GLENN, ed., *The E.J. Pratt Symposium*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1977. pp. xv, 172. \$4.80 pb.
- COHN, DORRIT, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. pp. x, 331. \$14.50.
- FOLKENFLIK, ROBERT, *Samuel Johnson, Biographer*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978. pp. 235. \$12.50.
- GILMAN, ERNEST B., *The Curious Perspective: Literary and Pictorial Wit of the Seventeenth Century*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978. pp. xii, 267. \$16.00.
- HARNER, JAMES L., *English Renaissance Prose Fiction, 1500 - 1660: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism*. Reference Publications in Literature Series. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1978. pp. xxiv, 556. \$42.00 U.S. \$46.20 Canada.
- HOLTGEN, KARL JOSEF, *Francis Quarles, 1592-1644*. Buchreihe der Anglia Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie 19. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1978. pp. xviii, 375; 18 pp. of plates. DM \$98.00.
- JANTZ, HAROLD, *The Form of Faust: The Work of Art and Its Intrinsic Structures*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press; Don Mills: Burns & MacEachern, 1978. pp. xxi, 201. \$16.95.
- MCMASTER, JULIET, *Jane Austen on Love*. English Literary Studies Monograph Series No. 13. Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria, 1978. pp. 85. \$3.75 pb.
- OWEN, IVON and MORRIS WOLFE, *The Best Modern Canadian Short Stories*. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1978. pp. 285. \$12.95.
- POOLE, ROGER, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*. New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1978. pp. 285. \$11.95.
- RIGNEY, BARBARA HILL, *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing and Atwood*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978. pp. 148. \$15.00.
- STANFORD, DONALD E., *In the Classic Mode: The Achievement of Robert Bridges*. Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1978. pp. 343. \$22.00, Sterling 12.50.
- WISEMAN, CHRISTOPHER, *Beyond the Labyrinth: A Study of Edwin Muir's Poetry*. Victoria, British Columbia: Sono Nis Press, 1978. pp. 252. \$10.00.
- YARAVINTELIMATH, C.R., *Jesting Jeremiah: A Study of Noel Coward's Comic Vision*. Dharwad: Karnatak University Press, 1978. pp. xv, 214. RS. 17.00 \$4.00, Sterling 1.50.
- Correction: In our April 1978 number Dharni Dhar Baskiyar's *The Inextinguishable Flame: Shelley's Poetic and Creative Practice* (Salzburg, 1977) was erroneously listed as *The Inexhaustible Flame*.