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BOOK REVIEWS



Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle. *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*. Eds. Charles Richard Sanders and Kenneth J. Fielding. Vols. VIII-IX. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. 1981.

Whatever one thinks of Carlyle's published works, it cannot be denied that he is more and more being lauded for his letters, which were not written for the public, even if we must admit that when he wrote them he bore in mind the judgment of one in comparison to whom the public was hardly a consideration. Milton-like, he knew his talents carried a heavy responsibility: to his brother John he avowed that "the talent which God has given me shall not rust unused." (*Collected Letters*, 8:49¹) We cannot deny either that, although strangely limited, it was an exceptional talent, amounting to genius. That he knew this too is clear in what he elsewhere wrote to John: "the longer I live among the people, the deeper grows my feeling (not a vain one; a sad one) of natural superiority over them; of being able (were the tools in my hand!) to do a hundred things better than the hundred I see paid for doing them." (8:9) Yet he produced works which were regarded then, and are still widely regarded, as flawed both as works of art and as vehicles of his critical and creative thought. *Sartor*

Resartus, *The French Revolution*, even *Frederick the Great*, may command the increasing admiration of a select few, who continue to find treasures in them which more than compensate for the flaws, proving him a poetic artist in prose and a profound thinker; but for the general public, though his sins were not scarlet, yet his books are not read. His letters, on the other hand, reveal almost none of the flaws and exhibit his most attractive literary and personal qualities. It was Arnold who wondered, in 1884, "if Carlyle really lived, in the long run, by such an invaluable record as that correspondence between him and Emerson, and not by his works." (*Discourses in America*, London 1885, p. 167) And today, more than just a few would agree with the Co-Editor of these Collected Letters, K.J. Fielding, that "when we can read the whole range of Thomas's, they may yet prove to be not only his most extensive work but his greatest." (*Thomas and Jane*, ed. Ian Campbell, Edinburg, 1980, Introd.)

However that may be, and we will avoid prophetic comparisons, the evidence in their favor is impressive. The thousands of Carlyle's letters, and of Jane's, that have been published in scattered volumes and articles, together with a significant number of new letters that have been found (and are still being found) continue to appear in successive volumes of the uniform, handsomely produced Duke-Edinburgh Edition, edited with professional skill and knowledge by Charles Richard Sanders and his team of editors. Volumes I-IV were issued in 1970, Volumes V-VII in 1976, and here are Volumes VIII and IX. Another twenty or more are still to come. Like the other two groups of volumes this one, with its 266 letters plus numerous postscripts and the Notes Carlyle wrote as commentary on Jane's letters after her death, presents one more chapter in the epistolary record of their life together. The time covered is the three years from January 1835 to December 1837. The place is London, except when one or the other seeks relief in Scotland or visits a friend. The subject throughout is Carlyle's arduous struggle--really an epic struggle--to complete the writing of *The French Revolution* and establish himself with some measure of success in the world of letters. This he does, when the book is favorably received by reviewers and when Fraser tells him in October 1837 that it is selling well. Many other subjects of course enliven these letters. He seems to have regarded letter-writing as a sort of relief from the stress of his work, and swiftly poured into them the practical, moral, and human concerns of his active mind. Always of primary interest was the welfare of his family in Scotland, his aging mother, of his brothers Alick and James, his sisters, Jean and Janet, and of Dr. John in Rome or

Munich, or wherever Lady Clare, his wilful, wealthy employer, summoned him. (9:43-4) Of interest also are his and Jane's new friendships, the mundane but important happenings in their domestic life at Number 5 Great Cheyne Row, and the larger, more disturbing happenings in an economically depressed Great Britain which they see heading fast toward the Hungry Forties. There could hardly be a more striking contrast to the lonely world of Craigenputtoch, now six months behind them, than the busy, bustling world of London. As strangers in a strange city Carlyle and Jane beheld it with a preternatural vision, commented on all that went on about them with wonder, or with scorn, and wrote their letters, in a style at once energetic and witty, self-assured and mocking, teeming with literary allusions, 'coterie' and proverbial sayings, private epithets, and, for the ordinary reader, obscure scotticisms.

As in the earlier volumes, the editors have provided both the general reader and the specialist with abundant information in the footnotes which despite the essential clarity of the letters is absolutely necessary if one is to understand all that is going on in and behind them. For each letter we are given the date and place of writing, the name and location of the addressee, its manuscript or other source, and its present location in library or special collection; we are told where and whether it has been previously published and the footnotes explain, often at considerable length, matters needing special explanation, such as, for example, the observable consequences in England of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 (9:187-188), or the identity and particular relevance of some person first met or mentioned, like John Sterling or Robert Browning, or social celebrities like Trelawny, Lytton Bulwer, or Barry Cornwall, encountered at London routs (9:8-9). Important material is provided from letters *to* the Carlyles, or is quoted from Carlyle's journal. Mostly however the editors draw on their close familiarity with Carlyle's works and milieu to explain references, track down allusions and quotations, correct previous errors of date or fact (including some of Carlyle's), and furnish such a wealth of apt comment and information that the strictest scholar could hardly ask for more.

But there *is* more: a thirty page index which meets the same high standards set in the earlier volumes, a list of the extant letters written *to* the Carlyles, and a useful chronology of the most important events. At the risk of carping, this reviewer still regrets that the editors did not furnish genealogical diagrams of the Carlyle and Welsh families. One must refer to other volumes for these. The footnotes and index do contain the proper identifications, but with four John Welshes, two George Welshes, three James Carlyles, and a number of

Jeans, Janes and Janets (both families typically fond of re-using favorite Christian names) it would have helped the reader to be able to see these complicated relationships visually. The same is true of geography: There is a general map of Scotland in Volume I of this Edition, and a more detailed map of the Annandale country. But with the Carlyles' leaving Scotland there is clear need for a map of the London of the 1830's. Again, one must go to other volumes if one wants to see the Chelsea they lived in, the Battersea Bridge where Jane watched the river-traffic, Sloane Street where Thomas went to mail letters, the King's Road where he saw "the ragged groups" carrying their dead during the Influenza epidemic of February 1837, and the Hyde Park where he saw William IV, ailing and soon to die, coming in from Windsor, looking "fresh and decent; clean as from spring water." (9:232) There is reason to think Carlyle himself would have approved the inclusion of good maps, for when his brother Alick, having emigrated, settled on a farm near Brantford, Canada, he urged him to "explain all to us, very minutely, so that on a Map we may be able to find it, and picture it out for ourselves." (*The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to his Brother Alexander*, ed. Edwin Marrs, Jr., Harvard, 1968, pp. 598-599)

Despite this lack, or perhaps because of it, the reader will picture out for himself, from the letters, an extraordinary panorama of London as seen and recorded by these two brave immigrants. Even after six months, the city is still new to them, and fascinating with its mixture of squalor and splendor, of obstruction and opportunity, of chaotic activity and bustle. For Jane it offered a welcome release from the loneliness of Craigenputtoch. But when their old friend Mrs. Montagu "threatening as heretofore to come and see me, but has not been yet, nor will not," (8:15) and when Harriet Taylor, "whom I could really love," proved "a dangerous looking woman and engrossed with a dangerous passion" (for Mill), and when, to the major loss of Edward Irving was added the relatively trivial but harrowing experience of being lamed for five weeks (her maid having accidentally poured boiling water on her foot), she had to tell John, "in short dear Doctor I am hardly better off for society than at Craig o' putta." Before long, however, her native wit and charm attracted social callers enough, and close friends like John Sterling, Harriet Martineau, and Susan Hunter, from whom she received the affection she needed, so that by mid-August she could write Jean Carlyle Aitken that "in most respects my situation is out of sight more suitable than it was at Craigenputtoch." (8:193) Still in moderately good health, her scalded foot at last healed, she is for the present content in her role of loyal wife to a genius, although she will soon show signs of wanting to be

recognized as an individual in her own right.

For Thomas, London is his testing-ground, the place where he will succeed in living by his pen, or not succeed. Failure is more than just a possibility, for the literary world is depressed. He had known that the move from Scotland was precarious, and now, his earlier mood of "deliberate valour" (*SSL* 14:274) becomes one of "sacred defiance." (8:10, 44) He finishes the first volume of his French Revolution in January 1835, and presses on with the second, but the writing, as always, makes him ill with what he used to call dyspepsia (though the word is rarely used in these letters); he complains to John that "Periodical Literature shuts her fist against me," that he has not earned a penny by that craft in 23 months (8:49) and wonders whether he should not try to publish the First Volume independently. Nevertheless, in that very defiance there is a "desperate hope" which he hardly dares express. *Sartor* has still not been published as a book, and the prospects even for this book are not bright. "I have no hope about the thing," he wrote Emerson, "except only that I *shall be done with it*: I can reasonably expect nothing from any considerable class here, but at *best* to be scolded and reproached..." In the same letter he shows his awareness of the dreadful uncertainty of his future: "I believe Literature to be as good as dead and gone in all parts of Europe at this moment, and nothing but hungry Revolt and Radicalism appointed us for perhaps three generations; I do not see how a man can honestly live by writing, in another dialect than that, in England at least...I must seek another craft than Literature." (8:40-41) But a few lines later he rebounds: "for I have possibilities too; the possibilities of London are far from exhausted yet." He believes stubbornly that hard, honest work will not go unrewarded, but the crucial fact is that he is on his own, separated by his whole inherited Scottish temperament from the Londoners he knows. Needing help, too, he will accept help only to get published the work he has done, and who in "this huge Babylon of a City" can or wishes to give such help? "A practical friend were of great use to me;...had the poor Duke (Jeffrey) but been able to go on! Unluckily he could not." (8:11) Nor could Leigh Hunt, nor Charles Buller. "Mill, I think, alone of them, would make any great effort to help me;...but he is so *theoric* a man, and like a printed Book, I never open myself to him." (8:9) The 'help' that is to come through Mill he will soon learn.

Neither he nor Jane regretted the move to London. Certainly it was not Basil Montagu's "this noble city," (8:245n); rather, in his epithetical vein, Carlyle called it "their smoking Babylon," "this Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace of London," "that Brick Babel," an "infamous Brick Sahara," an "immeasura-

ble Whirligig," and "this Metropolitan Monstrosity." Yet, he liked it. "I have grown greatly used to it now;" he wrote Alexander (it is hard to write about Carlyle without quoting him!) "and for most part walk the London Streets as if they were peopled only with Images, and the noise were that of some Niagara waterfall, or distracted universal carding-mill. There is something animating in it too; so that in my walks I *generally* turn Townwards, and go up thro' a larger or shorter circuit of real London Tumult (hereabouts we are not much noisier than in the stiller parts of Edinburgh, and in *our street* at 10 at night and later there is no noise at all): for 'man likes to see the face of man': one's very dispiritment in these peopled spaces is nothing to the gloom of Puttoch. My shortest turn (for I have various of various lengths) is to Hyde Park Corner; where I see Quality Carriages, six-horse wagons (horses all jingling with little bells), mail coaches and the Duke of Wellington's House." (8:17) In short, he might be tired of work, but, like Samuel Johnson, he would find no reason in that "great whirlpool of London," ever to be tired of life.

It is a familiar paradox in Carlyle's complex character that despite the vehement complaints about his desperate ill health which we find in his letters and his Journal he was, during these crucial years, never really sick; and with all his complaints about the torments of writing, and trying to write, he kept on, stubbornly, steadily, finishing chapter after chapter of his *French Revolution*, making often lengthy entries in his Journal, and writing these many letters besides. We half suspect that the complaints were a necessary purging of his impatience with the job, and were a sort of enabling act in the process of his writing. If, as he was fond of saying, the end of life is an action, not a thought, then writing was his form of action, of living most fully, his way of redeeming the time. Hence his interesting remark to Mill that he feels "alive nowhere except over the paper," (9:6), and his earlier Journal entry: "In general, except when writing, I never feel myself that I am *alive*." (Froude, II, 468)

Perhaps it was this attitude, plus his native magnanimity, that enabled him to survive with so much credit to himself the shocking destruction of the first Volume of *The French Revolution*. This event, so well known, and often discussed, and still to some extent shrouded in mystery, was the determining event of these three years. All else is affected by it. Though the idea of writing a book on the French Revolution had come to him earlier, it was not until July 1834 that he began serious work on it, reading and studying, and, by September, writing with the hope and expectation of publishing it early

the following spring. But the thing grew in his hands, an original plan of two volumes increasing to three. By January he was getting into Volume II, and speculated (again too hopefully) that he was "about *half* done." Early in March, when he was well along in "The Feast of Pikes," the blow struck. What exactly happened to that First Volume may never be known. The editors, presenting and weighing the available evidence in a long, two page footnote (8:67-68), think that it was more probably burned than torn up, and burned rather in the 'country house' belonging to Mrs. Taylor than in Mill's house, where manuscripts would less likely be mistaken for trash. It is notable that Mill never gave the Carlyles a clear account, and that he otherwise unaccountably brought Mrs. Taylor with him on that dramatic occasion of his calling at their door to break the news. It was on this occasion that Carlyle behaved in so magnanimous, even heroic, a way as to win the admiration, one would think, of the most determined anti-Carlylean. The letters he wrote afterwards to Mill (including one new letter) show more concern for Mill's feeling than for his own: "For I feel that your sorrow must be far sharper than mine; yours bound to be a *passive* one;" he assured Mill that he would and could rewrite that lost Volume: "the metal ...is there; the model also is, in my head. O my friend, how easily might the bursting of some puny ligament or filament have abolished all light *there* too." (8:70-71)

That rewriting would cost him dear. He accepted half of the £200 Mill offered as restitution, and after finishing up the chapter he had then been writing went back to start again at the beginning. "Louis the Well-Beloved" was done quickly and he could write "I have got back my spirits again (after this first Chapter), and hope I shall go on tolerably." (8:77) Somewhat later, to his young sister Jean Aitken Carlyle, he complained: "alas, bairn, I have 'the Bastille to take' a *second* time, so unlucky am I!" (8:91) And by May 10, after two months desperate struggle he had to quit temporarily: "I began to feel that toil and effort not only did not perceptibly advance it, but was even, by disheartening and disgusting me, retarding it. I gathered my papers together, therefore; sealed them up, and locked them in a drawer, with the determination not to touch *them* for one week from that date." (8:116) The move surprised even himself: "This is the first time in my life I ever did such a thing." Not until the 10th of May, seven weeks later, could he open that drawer and set to work again. The rewriting of Volume I, completed late in September, represents at least a six-month's loss of time and energy. Was the new version better or worse? Both he and Jane were inclined to think better. Our natural

desire today to be able to compare the two is futile enough, for only a few pages of the original version survive.

With some humor Carlyle could tell his brother John, "I feel like a man that had 'nearly killed himself accomplishing *zero*.' But *zero* or not *zero*, what a deliverance! I shall never without a kind of sacred shudder look back at the detestable state of enchantment I have worked in for these six months, and am now blessedly delivered from. The rest of the Book shall go on quite like child's play in comparison." (8:209) He did, in fact, write on steadily, though with the usual complaints and need for self-encouragement, to complete the second Volume in April, 1836, and the whole in January, 1837. After this Carlyle's letters are noticeably more relaxed. There will be the business of sending sheaves off to the printers, correcting the proofs, and after its publication in May, the waiting for news of its reception and for the reports of sales. Meanwhile, his "Diamond Necklace," written earlier, appeared in the January and February issues of *Fraser's Magazine*, and Mill published "Mirabeau" and "Histoire Parliementaire" in the *London and Westminster Reviews* of January and April. These brought in needed cash, but not enough, and before he could indulge himself in a trip to Scotland for much-needed rest he allowed friends, chiefly Jane Wilson and Harriet Martineau, to persuade him to give the series of lectures, in May on German Literature, as a more sensible course than accepting Emerson's earlier, and generous, invitation to lecture in America. The lectures brought him £135, enough to live on for another year; yet, great talker that he was, the idea terrified him. Their success, ironically, depended on the considerable support and attendance by London's aristocracy to whom Carlyle, with his nervous but eloquent speech and strong Scottish accent was something of an anomaly, a sort of educated Noble Savage who spoke profound truths. In June he was at last in Scotsbrig, for nearly three months, "the longest period of absolute idleness I can remember to have had." (9:307)

These letters make it clear that the Carlyles's ties with Scotland were never broken. Nearly half of Thomas's, about a hundred, were to his family; he wrote most often to his mother, then to his brothers John and Alick and sisters Jean and Janet. No letters to or from his sister Mary during these years seem to have survived. As in the earlier years, Carlyle is the prime mover in this correspondence. It satisfies a basic need to keep in constant touch with those he loves. "Write me!" he bids them, "Write to me when you have time to fill a sheet: news, descriptions of how you get on, what you suffer and enjoy, what you *do*; these are the best. I will answer." (8:349) If they cannot write, he adds, "Send an old

Newspaper from time to time with two strokes on it if you are well. Promise however to write *instantly* if you are ill!" He devised a scheme to make it easier for his mother to write,-- his mother who, we remember had to learn to read in order to read her famous son's letters and was with difficulty learning to write to reply to them. He instructs Janet, who lives in Dumfries, to buy twelve sheets of ruled paper at a Stationers shop and send it out to their mother, then writes his mother: "Now write you soon, on a ruled sheet, and tell me that you are well, and all going well,--if you can with truth. Let us be thankful that we have such a method of communicating, while separated." (8:22, 27) The importance Carlyle attached to letters accounts largely for their excellence. A letter, he told his mother, is "the emblem of your thoughts." (9:153) A loving letter, like Donne's Compass, had the power to symbolize the union of those who were separated. The letters Carlyle and Jane wrote to each other when they were apart have this power. Even on the prosaic level they evoke intimacy through the use of what Carlyle called their "coterie speech", the private sayings of the family, and through Scottish words and phrases, which the editors obligingly translate for the modern reader. Carlyle and Jane, knowing their letters were often read aloud to the others, sometimes resorted to German, or Italian, for matters they wished to keep private. (9:242-5)

There were difficulties in communicating by letter, in the 1830s. Rowland Hill's postal reform and the Penny Post, urged upon the government in 1837, had to wait until 1840 for enactment. Meanwhile, letters were charged by the single sheet (two sheets made a double letter, with double postage; hence all Carlyle's marginalia), and by distance. A single sheet cost 17d and took 43 hours to reach Edinburgh by mailcoach. Such expense was excessive for the frugal and letter-loving Carlyles, and it was not long before they were taking advantage of the 'franking' system, whereby peers and M.P.s, who were allowed to send 15 letters free per day, dispensed their extra 'franks' to friends, or even not-friends, with generous disregard to party differences,--a 'frank' being simply an envelope with the signature of the peer or M.P. on the corner. More than one of Carlyle's letters was franked by the Radical J.A. Roebuck or by a peer (8:198). Oftenest Carlyle obtained his franks through Mill, but other influential friends obliged. The custom was understandably an abuse of the postal system, and in 1837 reforms were introduced; nevertheless the last letter Carlyle wrote to his mother, two days before Christmas of that year, was franked by Charles Buller. For newspapers the postage was only a penny, and free after 1836,

so there was a steady traffic of old newspapers, the *Dumfries Courier* and *Herald* to Chelsea and the *Times* or the *Globe* to Scotsbrig; two strokes marked on the paper when all was well with them. If they wrote a message on the paper, as they occasionally did, then the paper cost nearly a pound on delivery and one might be in trouble with the law. Carlyle refused to accept the paper in such cases, and warned all the family not to write or mark "except two strokes on the cover." (9:121)

Although Jane wrote fewer letters than did Carlyle during this period (23 to his 228) she too believed that letter-writing was a duty which each member of their families owed to the others. It is quite possible that more of her letters were mislaid and lost, or later burned. Also, she had neither the need nor the regular occasions to write that Carlyle had, with his larger family to keep in touch with, and 'practical' friends like Mill who were connected with his work. Nevertheless, her presence is felt everywhere: in Carlyle's constant references to her in his letters, in the fifteen postscripts she added to them, and in her own letters, to her mother and various relatives, to John Sterling and other friends, and of course to her own husband. Here we have eight of her letters to Carlyle, ten of his to her. There would have been more had they been longer or oftener apart. When they were apart she demanded instant word. More than once she chafed him for not writing soon enough, as when he had left for Scotland in October 1835 and she had nothing but newspapers from him after two weeks:

Dearest

A newspaper is very pleasant when one is expecting nothing at all, but when it comes in place of a letter it is a positive insult to ones feelings. Accordingly your first newspaper was received by me in choicest mood, and the second would have been pitched in the fire had there been one at hand, when after having tumbled myself from the top story at the risk of my neck, I found myself deluded with "*wun penny im.*" However I flatter myself you would experience something of a similar disappointment on receiving mine, and so we are quits and I need not scold you-- (8:222)

When she went to Templand to visit her mother for a month in July 1836, she was again moved to 'scold' him for not writing soon enough, but on her return she described with great relish (to Mary Welsh, her Aunt-in-law) her reunion with Carlyle in London:

I did not find my Husband at the *Swan with two Necks*; for we were *in*, a quarter of an hour before the appointed time. so I had my luggage put on the backs of two porters and walked on to Cheapside, where I presently found a Chelsea Omnibus. By and by however, the omnibus stopt, and amid cries of "no room Sir"--"Cant get in"--Carlyle's face beautifully set off by a broad-brimmed white hat gazed in at the door,--like the Peri who "*at the gate-of heaven stood disconsolate*"--in hurrying along the Strand pretty sure of being too late,--amidst all the imaginable and unimaginable phenomena which that immense thorough fare of a street presents; his eye (heaven bless the mark) had lighted on *my trunk* perched on top of the omnibus and had recognized it! This seems to me one of the most indubitable proofs of *genius* which he ever manifested... (9:48)

She did not favor the daily writing of letters when they were apart, but preferred like Carlyle the regular letter-and-answer plan:

The writing-every-day plan is a nonsense--it is like mixing the whole penny-worth of milk with the coffee instead of taking only the cream--impairing the clearness and flavour of the liquor, for sake of '*whiteness*'--an error which (in the case of the coffee), we have discovered and discarded, and you may perhaps remember; even amid your present affluence of cream, [at Scotsbrig] which might make a less reflective man than yourself forget that he is come out of scarcity and into scarcity must return. (9:246)

Thus she argues, and at the same time demonstrates, that letters should be as cream to milk. Jane's brilliance as a letter-writer had been publicly recognized at least since the review of 1883 of Froude's *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*. She is by turns witty, anecdotal, caustic. To Carlyle she is generally loving, sometimes tart, always loyal; while in her letters to others, as John Skelton put it in his *Blackwoods* review of Froude, she is "at once playful and bitter. She freely recognizes his great qualities but her mockery plays around him like summer lightning." Especially these early letters written in London show her distinctive personality at its most cheerful and her writing talents at their most creative. During their courtship Carlyle had encouraged her to write some original work, and he was still doing so, recognizing her hardships as the wife of a busy writer (8:231), and convinced that she needed a more creative

outlet for her talents than letter-writing. Yet she could not, any more than Carlyle, become a poet or novelist, or produce (as far as we know) more than a fragment of a play (7:361-368), a fairytale which she sent to John Sterling but apparently later burned (9:132), and some fanciful dialogues like "The Bird and the Watch." (9:321-326) Perhaps the greatest hindrance was indeed living under the shadow of her genius husband. We learn with surprise that she felt neglected even by members of the Carlyle family, when she writes with some acerbity to Jean Carlyle Aitken:

You never in your life *answered* a letter of *mine* (and I have written you several) except little business notes from Dumfries, which could not be considered any *voluntary* expression of kind remembrance.--Had you even expressed a wish to hear from me since I came here; I would nevertheless have written, being of a disposition to receive thankfully the smallest mercies, when greater are denied--but as I said you have always put me off with a bare recognition of my existence which was small "*encouragement*." (8:193)

Jane generously lays this aloofness to Scottish family pride, her own as well as Jean's and adds, to our amusement, "You have it from your Mother who (as I have often told herself) with a great profession of humility is swallowed up in this sin."

Having been satisfied in the past to be the loyal wife and homemaker, proud, as she would continue to be till her death, to reflect his glory and support him in all his trials, she is now expressing more clearly her desire to be recognized for herself alone. In a letter to John Sterling she thanks him for sending her a separate letter "'all to myself', (as the children say)" which "was sure to give me a livelier pleasure, than any number of sheets in which I had but a secondary interest." Then borrowing a term Carlyle had once used to signify the self-conscious egotism of their unfortunate friend William Glen, she writes further:

For in spite of the honestest efforts to annihilate my *I-ity*, or merge it in what the world doubtless considers my better half; I still find myself a self-subsisting and alas! selfseeking *Me*. Little Felix, in the *Wanderjahre*, when, in the midst of an animated scene between Wilhelm and Theresa, he pulls Theresa's gown, and calls out, "*Mama Theresa I too am here!*" only speaks out with the charming truthfulness of a child, what I am perpetually

feeling, tho too sophisticated to pull peoples skirts, or exclaim in so many words; Mr Sterling "I too am here."
(8:138)

This passage reminds us of course of the recent collection of Jane's letters, *I Too Am Here*, edited with excellent notes and Introduction by Alan and Mary McQueen Simpson (Cambridge, 1977). We are reminded too of what is everywhere being described as the plight of Victorian women, Jane certainly being one whose talents might have found freer expression in a later age. And, we might add, in an age of more advanced medical knowledge. For Jane's talents and daily existence were fairly strangulated by ill health. London's climate did not agree with her. Already susceptible to headaches and colds, she was felled by one after another of the Influenza epidemics that struck the city. Brother John reported Cholera on the Continent but in London it was Influenza and thick fogs. Carlyle wrote Janet:

We lie *flat*, on the edge of a broad river: and now suppose there were a *mist*, black enough, and such that no smoke or emanation could rise from us, but fell again the instant it had got out of the chimneyhead! People have to light candles at noon, coaches have torchbearers running at the horses' heads. It is like a sea of ink. I wonder the people do not all drop down dead in it,--since they are not fishes...It is cause enough for Influenza. Poor Jane, who misses nothing, has caught fast hold of this Sunday last, and has really been miserably ill.
(9:122)

Without a strong constitution she could hardly have survived these epidemics, which Carlyle thought as severe in their way as Cholera. To the modern reader it seems a marvel that anybody survived at all, with London's poor sanitation, its often infected drinking water, and the ineffectual, even harmful, medicines prescribed by the physicians of the day. Brother John, himself a doctor, could do little but send henbane for Jane's headaches. For various other afflictions they took senna pods, 'blue Pills' (containing mercury), and castor oil. Carlyle took these too but he obviously had the stronger constitution, and, (he would add) the stronger will-power. "As for myself," he wrote Janet, "I have felt these wretched fogs penetrating into me, with a clear design to produce cough, but I have set my face against it and said No. This really does a great deal." (9:122) And later, to John about the Influenza, after remarking again that Jane "never escapes anything

that is going," he says "I for my own share would never *consent to accept it.*" (9:143) All the same he has "been obliged to go on with a series of snivelling colds and semi-colds;" but, "as I resist all temptation to cough, I think, if the Sun will hold out, I shall expel it in two days more."

Let no one smile, however, at their sufferings. These two Scots not only survived in London; they prevailed. If Jane suffered the more, it is the more wonder that she could write such extraordinary letters. Her postscripts too, added to so many of Carlyle's letters, contain much of her liveliest wit and, good though Carlyle's letters are, appear like frosting on the cake.

We cannot fail to be struck by the buoyancy, the consistency of temper, in all these letters of Carlyle's; characteristically they follow much the same epistolary formula: 1. Sorry I am late writing, 2. I (we) have been well (or not) and done this and that, 3. In answer to your letter... 4. How are you and yours? 5. Farewell, and write to me, 6. P.S. Oh yes, and.... But their 'consistency', in another sense, varies greatly. We saw in the letters he wrote from Craigenputtoch the loyal, clannish affection he felt for all his family, in contrast to his polished politeness to friends and acquaintances. So to Emerson, whom he is genuinely fond of and grateful to, he writes sincere words of praise for *Nature* and "The American Scholar," but withholds his reservations about American Transcendentalism. (8:20) For Mill, to whom there are more letters than to anyone else in these two volumes, he felt high regard and gratitude, but affection was curbed by Mill's logical and aloof nature: "One esteems him exceedingly; but to love *him*? It were like loving the 47th of Euclid." (8:263)

Instinctively generous towards those in trouble, he sent cordial and sympathetic notes to his neighbor Leigh Hunt, tried with some others to get him a pension, and tried to help Hunt's unfortunate son John who "was out of his Father's house, could not get back again, and wanted 'a few shillings', being in a 'starving' state!" (8:26) The sixteen letters here by Carlyle to Hunt, three of them previously unpublished, present only a part of their long and strange friendship, but some of them are among his most courtly-courteous and kind. Among all their London friends it was for John Sterling that Carlyle felt an affection nearest love. Sterling's youth and charm, his Anglican beliefs (which Carlyle of course did not share, but respected), his novel *Arthur Coningsby* ("a very superior book," though a novel), all attracted Carlyle to him, so that, despite opinions and beliefs that might have divided them (including Sterling's two letters mixing sharp criticism with praise of *Sartor*, one of which Carlyle burned) Carlyle

would later remember how they walked together through London's streets "talking on moralities, theological philosophies; arguing copiously, but *except* in opinion not disagreeing." (*Sterling*, 106) In August 1844, to Sterling dying of tuberculosis, he was to write that deeply felt, deeply moving letter of farewell. Always eloquent on the wonders and mysteries of life, he was equally eloquent on those of death. In letter after letter Carlyle rises above the mundane to heights, or plumbs the depths, of the same mystical feelings that went into the writing of *Sartor*. "What a thin film it is," he wrote Emerson, when Emerson had lost a brother, "that divides the Living from the Dead." (8:38) His affection for individual people is charged with a tragic sense of the transience of their lives, nonetheless important for that; but the large and generous view he takes of human nature derives from this vision of the present as seen in the perspective of the infinite past and infinite future--what, in Carlyle's *French Revolution*, C.F. Harrold called "synoptic view,"--illustrated in this to Jane:

...it is a great *world* of a truth that we are alive; that I am alive;--that I saw the "Sweet Milk Well" yesterday; flowing (for the last four thousand years) from its three sources on the hillside; the origin of Middlebie Burn; and noted the little dell it had hollowed out all the way, and the huts of Adam's Posterity built sluttishly on its course; and a Sun shining overhead, ninety millions of miles off; and Eternity all round; and Life a vision, dream and yet fact,--woven, with uproar, on the Loom of Time. (8:253-254)

London's streets might seem "peopled only with images," but these letters are written not to images but to people who for the reader are reified by the love, respect, or even no-respect, he shows them. "Man likes to see the face of man."

There is scorn as well as love in these letters, possibly more than in the earlier ones, owing as much, perhaps, to the burned manuscript incident as to his chronic pride. Whereas another writer might have resigned himself to the publisher's rejection of a work like *Sartor*, Carlyle reacted with anger at the "loathsome trade" of Booksellers like Fraser who would not pay for good work honestly done. Though he knew the publishers had their own problems this did not soften his contempt for them. Harriet Martineau might remark with justice, "He has a terrible deal of the spirit of contempt," but we soon realize that his *expressions* of contempt were not malicious but only a form of his defiance, which was, for him,

necessary if he was to remain strong. Moreover, he often directed scorn at himself and at his own works. Rarely did his productions meet the high standards he set for himself. "I wrote a long rigmarole on Walter Scott;" he told Sterling, "a thing deserving instant fire-death, but which they are going to print." (9:378) Again to Sterling, "My habitual conviction about the [*French Revolution*] is that it ought to be *burnt*, that it will never be worth a farthing to any man or woman." (9:67) Such complaints, as purgative as castor oil, cleared his spirit for resuming work, and were, besides, balanced by a common-sense knowledge that his work was indeed good, or as good as he could make it under the circumstances. And since no one was really to blame for these circumstances, not even the Booksellers, but rather that combination of obstructions which he called "Necessity," his salutary sense of the ridiculous took over and he could laugh heartily at them, with his old humor.

In fact, humor and good humor set the dominant tone of Carlyle's letters, a humor of thought and expression which complements Jane's. His ludicrous picture of Cavaignac, who upon being introduced to Mrs. Grote, "made I think *five* successive low bows...then, without uttering a word, reeled back, like a sheep *from* the slaughter (or a *calf*, for you know how he *goes*), and landing in a very elegant attitude, stood, five paces off, with his hat behind his back, looking out into space and the general movement of the Rout." (9:18); his description of George Darley's stutter, "a low, sweet, long-continued anxious prelude; mixture of ticking, clucking and cooing (all *pianissimo*); which some attenuated sense at last follows." (8:151), the tableau he draws at his own expense of his attempt to converse with the Countess degli Antoni (later to teach Jane Italian): "a Bologna liberal and banished: a beautiful Lombard woman, with the finest Lombard grey eyes: she had no English; I answered: *che sciagura* [how unlucky]! --and then followed the prettiest '*dungues*!' We talked in French jargon and dumb show. The poor Countess, once rich, is obliged to teach music here, and sing! Of Politics she hinted nothing; and seemed to have no appetite." (8:154), and his lively account to Jane of his long journey to Annan in October 1835 (8:217-218) are typical examples. The style is cursive, the expression of an active and ready intelligence which translates thoughts into words without apparent effort, tending towards telegraphic concision rather than orthodox syntax yet spinning elaborate metaphors. In short these letters abound in felicitous expressions, pregnant thoughts, quoted or quotable, activating the reader's imagination and leading him through the homily and practical advice to his

brothers and cheerful versions of even their own bad news to his mother, to anecdote and caricature, Biblical quotation and proverb, to animated discussions of their intellectual interests. Subjects of vital concern to Carlyle like his proposal to improve National Education (published here for the first time, 9:29-36), his thoughts of emigrating to America as a last resort if he could not survive in London, his disappointed efforts to obtain various editorships and professorships, and the dramatic success of *The French Revolution*, which by late 1837 was inducing Fraser to consider publishing not only *Sartor Resartus* as a book but also reprinting the periodical essays in separate volumes--these are intermixed with delicious trivia. Jane has constant and comic trouble with her servants, eight of them in these three years including the one who scalded her foot. Carlyle tells Mill how to make "Scotch oatmeal" porridge. We learn that Jane's cat killed one of her canaries, that "tea and whipt egg" was a favorite beverage but that they are losing their appetite for tea in favor of coffee, and that Carlyle objected to the accenting of his name on the last syllable.

Some matters are notably missing in these letters. Carlyle does not discuss the literary problems of his writing of *The French Revolution*, nor does he say much about the rewriting of Volume I except that he and Jane thought it better organized than the original. On a lower level, we find nothing about the famous row Carlyle had with Panizzi of the British Museum in May, 1835, which was never patched up.

The reader will welcome the 60 of these letters which have not been published before. Any new letter, however brief, has for us its unique value, either because it offers fresh material or because of the individual way it is expressed. There are ten to his mother, nearly a third of those written to her at this time, so our knowledge of that filial relationship is considerably enriched. Worth mentioning is the doubly humorous letter of 9 November 1837, where, between sadly describing Jane's feeble health and trying to decide on their future plans he descends with equal seriousness to describing in detail the healing of a sore on his thumb: it "hardened into a little speck of a *scab*; which little speck in process of time peeled itself off, and sticking to it there was a little bit of glass about the bulk of a pin-head: this once out the whole difficulty was over. Might all the mischief that is in us but come out as cleverly!" (9:346) There is a fine new letter to Jane, telling her when and how he is to journey home after his long rest in Scotland, and ending "would I were there; safe in thy arms. God keep thee, and forever bless thee, my good Lassie!" (9:305) An even finer, perhaps the

best of the sixty, is Jane's long letter to Carlyle, of 3 August 1837, in which she expresses the terrors she feels at the prospect of going on a month-long journey through southern England with the elder Sterlings, terrors which do not at all suppress some of her most sparkling wit and mockery. In the same letter she informs him, referring to the favorable reviews of *The French Revolution*, that "*the Metropolis* is entirely occupied with our work," thus claiming her share of credit for its success, which no one will be inclined to deny her.

One cannot over-estimate, or measure, the value of these two Volumes which bring us closer to the completion of the whole Duke-Edinburgh Edition. Not only do they cover a crucial period in the Carlyles's lives but they offer us examples of letter-writing at its best, of the Carlyles's letters at their best. It is, we must not forget, a privilege to read what began as private, intimate communications, which have now become unique biographical and historical records, windows into their minds and hearts. As nothing else can, personal letters tell us directly how their writers regarded themselves, loved their families and friends, and faced the world they lived in from day to day with all its 'presentness', facing their unknown, as yet un-lived-in future, as we face ours. With human faults enough they faced their uncertain future with courage, dignity, and humor. More of their future will, in the same way, be shown us in the Volumes yet to come of the *Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*. When this noble project is completed--a completion devoutly to be wished--and when all Carlyle's published works are re-edited in a uniform and critical edition to match this of the letters--an edition sorely needed and, as we hear, already being planned or at least envisaged--then, and only then, we think, will there be a basis for considering whether Carlyle is to 'live' by his works or his letters. Meanwhile, we can only say, with "desperate hope," let him live!

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NOTES

¹References to volume and page of the *Collected Letters* will be in arabic numerals.

Froude's Life of Carlyle. Ed. John Clubbe. Columbus, Ohio. Ohio State University Press. 1979. xxvi + 725 pp.

Judged simply as a work of literature, James Anthony Froude's four-volume memoir of Carlyle stands out among the seemingly numberless late Victorian official lives, not so much for its hero-worship as for its readability and its ironic self-consciousness. Unlike so many of the other Victorian biographers, Froude was neither widow nor child of his biographee, and, almost uniquely, he came to his task, not just with a deep devotion to his subject, but as an established writer, with a developed style of his own. Significantly, his career had included fiction-writing, as well as reams of strongly-opinionated narrative history. This training is important, for, as A.O.J. Cockshut points out in his *Truth to Life* (1974), Victorian biographers tend to give much livelier and more rounded portraits in their historical biographies, than when they are dealing with their own contemporaries; in his historical writing, Froude had developed an approach to character-description free from the pious proprieties circumscribing most Victorian treatments of more recent subjects. Froude borrows, too, from Carlyle's own historical method, in the dramatic intermingling of documentary history with vivid editorial interpretation, and he manages to shape his material much more strongly than most Victorian compilers of the obligatory *Life and Letters*. Cockshut argues, indeed, that the tragic picture Froude gives of Carlyle makes him "the greatest of all our biographers" (p. 152).

But Cockshut was stressing the literary qualities of the biography, and Carlyle scholars have not usually proved so unqualifiedly appreciative of Froude's achievement. From its first publication, in 1882 and 1884, the biography has been clouded with controversy. At that time, Carlyle's niece was in dispute with Froude and his co-executor over the ownership, and hence the copyright-proceeds, of Carlyle's papers. The publication of Froude's first two volumes was bracketed by publication of Carlyle's own reminiscence of his wife (1881) and the collection of her letters and memoirs (1883); these both served to focus reviewers' attention on Froude's treatment of the Carlyle marriage, and to exacerbate dispute over his propriety and fairness. Froude also left himself open to criticism by treating his documentary sources with remarkable carelessness, even for a Victorian biographer--not so much in distorting Carlyle's meaning, as in continual minor misreadings and misprintings of the manuscripts the younger Carlyles sought to guard. There were, too, the famous but underdocumented allegations of Carlyle's violence and impotence, which

influenced Froude's treatment even though he did not admit them to his text, and in which his belief seems to have strengthened the longer the controversy went on (cf. his *My Relations with Carlyle*, 1903). The very pressures of the controversy seem to have made Froude's tone in the later volumes more determinedly severe on his subject, and this gives a peculiar development through the work, as if Froude had admired Carlyle less and less the better he got to know him; something, at least, of the tragic reversal in the life, between the second and third volumes, results from such extrinsic factors rather than from an intrinsically tragic vision. Froude's own biographer, the late Waldo H. Dunn, defiantly maintained that Froude was essentially in the right on all these matters, but K.J. Fielding's discussion of the whole Froude controversy (in *Carlyle Past and Present*, 1976) lays to rest any romantic picture one might have of Froude as the honest scholar struggling to tell the truth in the face of hypocritically-obstructive relatives.

With all the controversy, however, and despite the resulting imbalance and shortcomings, Froude's *Life* remains a powerful, firsthand, contemporary interpretation, and viewed in that light, it is a work with which all who study Carlyle must still come to terms. Professor Clubbe, long involved with the Duke-Edinburgh *Collected Letters* of the Carlyles, has now produced a one-volume abridgment, designed to make Froude's massive work available to the modern reader. The actual documentary value of Froude's work has been, and will be, much diminished, with the publication of more authoritative modern editions for many of the sources he excerpted, but the interpretation he offered is still of great interest. Professor Clubbe has cut Froude from over six hundred thousand words to a mere two hundred thousand, but nearly all the cutting is from the documentary baggage, not from Froude's own narrative (where he estimates a cut of only ten to fifteen per cent). The editor has taken an unusual degree of freedom with his text: his omissions are not signalled in the text, he has written short new bridging passages where needed (also un-signalled), he has rearranged the chapter divisions and provided chapter titles, and he has made silent emendations of grammar or small factual inaccuracies (such as dates), so that the resulting new version, as Professor Clubbe himself remarks, "has taken on certain of the characteristics of a collaboration" (p. 63). Though physically the book is even heavier and more unwieldy than one of Froude's volumes, Professor Clubbe has created a very readable version, which will reward and delight non-specialists and general Victorianists, previously put off by the massive bulk of the original.

Two features of the new edition, though, make it of significance to Carlyle specialists also. First, Professor Clubbe has provided a substantial introductory essay (pp. 1-60), which attempts a partial rehabilitation of Froude from the charges of inaccuracy and irresponsibility, and which, rather more convincingly, gives the fullest explication yet of the literary skill of Froude's portrait. Second, and much more importantly, he has revised Froude's quotations for accuracy, rechecking the texts against manuscript and appending some fifty pages of endnotes, largely references for the quoted material, along with some explanatory annotation. Since Clubbe has been able to use the nephew Alexander Carlyle's annotated copies of Froude, he has been able to correct even Froude's quotations from Carlyle's journal, for which Froude is still the only printed authority. He has also incorporated into the notes some of Alexander's marginal criticisms of Froude's interpretation. Carlyle scholars, therefore, will find the new abridgement an essential companion to their use of the original four-volume text. If one should never quote Froude from Clubbe's version without checking the original, one would be equally unwise ever to quote Carlyle from Froude without checking Clubbe. For many letters in the later years, which the *Collected Letters* have not reached, Clubbe's abridgement is the most authoritative printed source.

I noticed a few points where I felt Clubbe's two-fold aim, of a modern popular abridgement and a scholarly edition, were unnecessarily at odds. On page 466, for instance, Clubbe simply puts in his text the English for a Euripides quotation, where Froude had quoted in Greek, and on page 640 he corrects Froude's quotation from Shakespeare, relegating Froude's version to the endnotes; if there is to be annotation anyway, there seems little point in this kind of minor fiddling with the text. Very occasionally, I suspected that the abridging process was deliberately cleaning up those aspects of Carlyle most likely to deter the modern reader (and so, incidentally, making Froude's treatment seem more balanced and less anti-heroic); for instance, on pages 632-3, the portrait of Disraeli omits entirely Froude's hair-raising comments on Carlyle's anti-Semitism (*Life in London*, II, 448-9). Readers of *SSL* would probably pick up for themselves the very small error, where "roup" is glossed in the text as "heavy mist" (p. 363) rather than as the furniture-auction the impoverished Carlyles obviously had been fearing, but one cannot tell from this edition that the uncertainty over Scots vocabulary is Clubbe's and not Froude's.

Overall, however, Professor Clubbe has brought off a very bold and remarkable venture. It would have been quite un-

economic to publish a full scholarly edition of Froude's original text, and this abridgement will surely open the eyes of many Victorianists for the first time to the sheer readability of the best Victorian biographies. At the same time, it is good to have in print the textual corrections, references and annotations that can help the scholar use Froude effectively. Bringing together the two different kinds of project has inevitably meant larger-than-usual exercise of editorial discretion and some real compromises, but it has made good economic sense. Professor Clubbe has created a very unusual kind of edition, one which will be valuable to generalists and specialists alike.

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John Galt 1779-1979. Ed. Christopher A. Whatley. Edinburgh. The Ramsay Head Press. 1979. 212 pp.

Galt criticism seems bedevilled by a tendency to make rather too large claims for Galt's artistic achievement and his contribution to the art of the novel. It is true that Galt was for a long time shamefully neglected, not least in his own country, and it is perhaps significant that with the exception of Dr. Jennie Aberdein's pioneering critical life all the book-length studies of him should have come from outside Scotland, the latest being that of Professor Gibault of Grenoble, a balanced and informative study. But even Gibault ends up by calling for a critical reassessment and seems to find fault with attempts to deal with Galt in a mode of sober examination, however pronouncedly such a procedure inspires the largest part of his own work.

It is regrettable to find, in the collection of articles edited by Professor Whatley, the rather ludicrous comparisons of Galt with Balzac and Zola seriously repeated. Much more welcome, in the same volume, is Professor John T. Ward's assessment of Galt as "one of Scotland's most amusing and most observant novelists," even though this errs on the niggardly side. At his best Galt is more than merely amusing and observant (though certainly that) and shows a remarkable sense of the tragic and the pathetic in the treatment of Claude Walkinshaw and the Rev. Micah Balwhidder. Few critics seem to notice with what subtle means Galt conveys the growing iso-

lation of the narrator of the *Annals*, in his second marriage and in the age of diminishing isolation for his parish.

But humour, power of observation, subtlety of first-person narrative technique and sense of tragedy can never obscure the fact that these were gifts which are conspicuous in few of Galt's works and which are not even in evidence throughout any single work of his major period of creativity with the exception, the present reviewer would claim, of *Annals of the Parish*. No critical flaunting of Aristotelian concepts (such as the pointing to a technique of repeated peripeties) can ever make the whole of *The Entail* a masterpiece, and even in the part of it where Claude's obsession and his resulting remorse make it a singularly arresting story there are some improbabilities not only of plot but of psychology. However cleverly Galt takes off small-town jokery-pokery in the character of Provost Pawkie, no critic in his senses could maintain that the portrait has the subtlety achieved in the exposure of innocent self-delusion in *Annals of the Parish*. And to call *Ringan Gilhaize* a "neglected masterpiece" (admittedly with a following interrogation mark) as Patricia J. Wilson does in her contribution to the volume under review is to disregard the mechanical, tiresomely repeated procedure in the Reformation part of the story ("My grandfather was there and he used to say...") and Galt's unashamed verbatim incorporations of large chunks from Wodrow. There is fine and true pathos in that novel, certainly, and a justified correction of some of Scott's attitudes in *Old Mortality*, but a masterpiece, surely not! Why not give Galt his due--which is large enough--and no more? To emphasize and exaggerate a writer's merits at the expense of--even to the exclusion of--his flaws is hardly a permissible critical procedure. In Galt's case there is, unfortunately, no denying that his artistic discretion was regrettably soon overridden by his heady ambition and by his embarrassed financial situation. All the contributors to this collection of articles who quote from Galt's *Literary Life* seem to take what he says there at face value, without considering the obvious fact that it is the product of a man pathetically and understandably in need of self-assertion and rationalization.

After such strictures it becomes imperative to say that *John Galt 1779-1979* contains a good deal of valuable scholarly discussion. It is striking that the most rewarding articles are those of three historians and the one by J. Derrick McClure, who examines Galt's clever use of standard English and Scots in the idiolects of Balwhidder and Pawkie. It is to be sincerely hoped that McClure aims to extend his study of this neglected aspect of Galt, the more so since what he

can give of illustration and conclusions within the scope of a short article shows a very sure grasp of essentials coupled with critical sensitivity.

Professor Ward--already quoted above--writes interestingly on the political background of *The Member*, Galt's last success in the pseudo-autobiographical story, and the editor writes with equal acumen on Galt's use of local history in the *Annals*, with several revealing pointers to Galt's occasional distortions of fact. In a restrained manner Professor Whatley takes issue with critics who have called Galt's stories "factual," and in the strictest sense of the word he is, of course, right; but few sociological novelists would be absolutely true to every piece of historical fact, and "factual" should after all be read as meaning based on fact. When Professor Whatley points out that Galt's Dalmailing is not a "typical" Ayrshire village it needs to be stressed that Galt does not make it out to be absolutely typical--and surely he was justified in amalgamating facts and developments from here and there in south-west Scotland! But this does not make the article's strict examination of fact versus fiction in the *Annals* less valuable. Professor Whatley's contribution also has the merit of really showing an understanding of how Galt manages to mix in, with the subtle characterization of his narrator, not only historical fact (or near-fact) but also his own social and political opinions.

The introduction of such opinions on Galt's part is denied by Kenneth G. Simpson in his article "Ironic Self-Revelation in *Annals of the Parish*"--which is full of cogent comment on that aspect of Galt's artistry--but such a denial cannot be made on the basis of the *Annals* only: naturally Galt's other early works, including his articles for *Blackwood's Magazine* and other non-fictional writings, must be considered in comparison. The present reviewer made an attempt in the chapter on Galt's social thought in *John Galt's Scottish Stories 1820-1823* to show that many facets of Scottish moral philosophy and current political thought which influenced Galt's views are in fact reflected in his stories of that period; and that some aspects are noticeably absent, no doubt for the simple reason that while Galt had picked up a good many hints from his readings in the rich holdings of the Greenock Library, probably also from sermons in the Moderate strain, some of the Common Sense philosophical issues did not interest him all that much.

Dr. A.C. Chitnis contributes a detailed consideration of two aspects of Scottish enlightenment thought, relating them to Galt, and offers a valuable survey of trends of thoughts and attitudes in the period covered by the *Annals*.

Dr. Ian Campbell examines Galt's strategies of multiple point of view in *The Ayrshire Legatees* and brings out some overlooked subtleties besides writing convincingly on Galt's treatment of the younger members of the Pringle family; but the article appears to be one of those not wholly acceptable attempts at critical re-evaluation. What, for instance, does it mean that the story "gains in potential richness compared even with *Annals of the Parish* in the complexity of games Galt can play with his readers and his characters"? If only potential, where is the gain? Besides, through other technical means *Annals of the Parish* is certainly even more complex.

Similarly, it is difficult to share the conviction expressed in Dr. Keith M. Costain's article on *The Entail* that it gains in artistic stature by being considered in the light of one particular definition of tragicomedy; but let it be said that both this contribution and that of Miss Wilson on *Ringan Gilhaize* yield insights into Galt's ability to handle pathos.

Professor MacQueen in a short article on the theology of *Ringan Gilhaize* makes out a case for Galt as a Calvinist and Predestinarian. Galt's attitudes to the Church--or to the Churches, rather--would be in need of a detailed examination. In places one finds, apart from good-humoured indulgence, a strain of scepticism also.

The volume is introduced with a survey of Galt's career by Professor Ian A. Gordon and ends with a bibliographical note by Dr. W.R. Aitken. This only includes recent editions of works by Galt and some recent articles, and the reader is referred to the NCBEL and to Professor Gordon's biography of 1972. To this should now be added the detailed bibliography in Professor Gibault's monograph.

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Henri Gibault. *John Galt, Romancier Ecossais*. [Grenoble].
Université de Grenoble. 1979. 266 pp.

In many ways this is a most welcome book--a "life and works" study of Galt, with a brief note on each of the novels and critical evaluations in addition to an intelligent and comprehensive scene-setting which puts Galt in a perspective of British literature with a thoroughness which is very necessary to comprehend a talent so many-sided. Professor Gibault's

subject is an elusive one, and the chief merit of this book lies in the thorough methodology which imposes an order-- Professor Gibault's order, but one which works well for this book--on a scattered *oeuvre*, one much too big and much too diverse to be totally successful. "Il a beaucoup écrit, trop écrit," admits Professor Gibault of Galt, but there is a saving professionalism: Galt remains "...un talent qui se galvaude dans des travaux besogneux ou bâclés, sans pourtant jamais déchoir d'un certain seuil de compétence et d'invention."

The method of this study is to move from a brief life to a stimulating section on "incertitudes et ambiguïtés d'une culture." The published fiction is then tackled in major sections: "Le romancier perdu" including many minor works, not merely lumped together but divided by source or major influence, "Recherches et explorations marginales," "Galt et la convention romanesque," and "Le 'rival' de Walter Scott."

Next come what will be for many the most important section, on the *Scottish Stories*, including the rarely-discussed North American novels, then two still important but lesser sections on "Le patrimoine reconquis ou perdu" (*The Entail*, *The Last of the Lairds*) and "Le Champion des Covenanters," which of course treats of *Ringan Gilhaize*, a neglected work whose critical discussion occupied an interesting part of Christopher Whatley's recent *John Galt 1779-1979*. Finally come a substantial "Galt et le roman," and "Conclusions générales": Iconography, notes, index and a very useful *Table des matières* (listing the location of the notes to each chapter--a habit worth copying) complete the volume.

The virtues of Professor Gibault's approach have been suggested in the width of the vision he brings to bear on his subject (including a very suggestive section on Byron's relationship to Galt in literary history), the calm methodology, the all-inclusiveness of the study of the fiction. Nor does he sink to adulation: "Galt, hors de l'Ayrshire, n'a ni le sens ni le souffle historique" (p. 217). "*The Howdie* est d'une encre plus diluée que *The Betheral* qui accuse lui-même une moindre prise sur la réalité psychologique et sociale des *Scottish Stories*" (p. 119). "*The Majolo*, *The Earthquake*, *Eben Erskine*, *Lawrie Todd* et *Bogle Corbet* sont des romans artistiquement peu satisfaisants..." (p. 90). Yet already we must qualify: the last sentence continues to point out the value of Galt's willingness to push out beyond the limitations of Scottish stories, and is used to point up the inadequacy of the Blackwood mentality to do justice to the Blackwood's author in Galt. Galt's Scottish stories, we conclude (p. 218) are a very much more achieved success, though even here the

act of saving a vanishing Scotland as the Scottish Enlightenment wanes is accompanied by artistic shortcomings which make their judgment necessarily include "une marge d'incertitude." But then this investigation modestly concludes with the thought that Galt needs first re-edition, and rigorous critical examination, in order to take his proper place not in a Scottish, but in a global context, and "Ces travaux d'une appréciation globale ne font que commencer" (p. 222).

The same all-inclusiveness which gives room to all the short pieces of lesser value as well as to the acknowledged masterpieces, necessarily means that it is not possible to say much about any one book--yet on balance the critical comments are just and the modesty of the conclusion defuses criticism that one could have wished for more wide-ranging concluding discussion. The book is not handsomely produced (with a rather disoriented map) but given the restricted readership, we must be grateful for its appearance as a substantial survey and contribution to Galt studies much outweighing its own modest self-assessment.

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Gregory Kratzmann. *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations 1430-1550*. Cambridge University Press. 1980. xii + 282 pp.

Dr. Kratzmann has set himself a very ambitious topic and in order to assess the value of the book it is first necessary to outline his aims and the problems he faced in trying to achieve them. First, he wishes to establish not only the degree to which Scottish literature was indebted to English within his chosen period but also to explore the possibility of such an influence working in reverse. The linguistic closeness of the works concerned adds a further difficulty, for obviously very close imitation in such a context is impossible. As he himself suggests, the "varius sis" side of the classical topos is from this point of view every bit as important as the "tamen idem." In addition, however, he has a clearcut theory, propounded mainly in Chapters One and Eight. Simply put, this theory upholds that Scottish literary superiority in the 15th and 16th centuries was largely due to the refusal in Scotland to follow Lydgate and what Kratzmann calls the "conservatism and introspection" of that

tradition. Scots poets preferred a sort of critical Chaucerianism, which helped to maintain the liveliness of their own poetic traditions. As a result when Skelton, "the first truly inventive English poet since Chaucer," looked around for a new means of infusing life into English letters he turned to Scottish models (despite his loudly proclaimed contempt for that race). If this theory is correct, we are dealing with literary interrelationships at a time when the two poetic traditions are poles apart. The Scots shun their English contemporaries and look back a hundred years to Chaucer, while the English only begin to appreciate the work of the makars in the second and third decades of the 16th century. All this scarcely makes the task of the comparative critic any easier.

For the most part I find Dr. Kratzmann's views quite convincing and his whole argument stimulating. He sets up a series of oppositions between Scottish and English writing, which are on the whole plausible, if rather rigorously drawn. In almost every instance the Scottish line is found to be superior. The enlivening authorial presence, the tonal variety, the variation of language and metre, the allegoric inventiveness to be found in the works of James I, Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas is set against an English tradition epitomised by Lydgate:

The diffuseness of syntax, the extended amplifications, the monotonous rhythms, and the absence of significant variations of tone and language in Lydgate's longer works are all parts of a composite deficiency--the lack of any sense of the poet's presence in his work.

Dr. Kratzmann at this point runs the danger of alienating hitherto sympathetic readers by seeing things too starkly. Are we not conscious of a forceful narratorial presence in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and in much of Hoccleve's verse? Is the comment on Lydgate limited to his longer poems because there is significant tonal variety in some of his shorter works? The literary situation in the two countries is just not as simple as this. What one now awaits is the influence of this thesis on the particular comparative analyses which follow.

In situations where essential sources are clearly defined Dr. Kratzmann proves himself a perceptive and at times an ingenious critic. When dealing with the *Kingis Quair*, he expertly sets out the indebtedness to Chaucer but shows how the uncertainty of the Chaucerian narration in *The Parlement of Foules* is replaced by James's purposefulness as narrator. He also persuasively suggests that the prayer to Venus in the

Scottish poem is a witty commentary on Chaucer's prayer for lovers in the Proem to Book 1 of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Instead of adopting a papal charity towards lovers, the human soul would do better to submit itself to actual amorous experiences. His comparison between *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Testament* is equally impressive. He draws them together as poems which seek to further truth in love and have central characters who elevate emotional experiences to a position inadmissible in Christian or Platonic philosophy. One is conscious here (as in the discussion on Douglas and Surrey as Virgilian "translators") of critical sensitivity going hand in hand with thorough research.

My reservations lie in those areas where the question of indebtedness is more open and where one or other of Dr. Kratzmann's initial "theses" is involved. To simplify, I shall focus on two specific poets--Chaucer and Lydgate. Of these, Chaucer is held to be the major English influence on Scottish poetry during the period with which we are concerned. While I would not wish to deny this and have indeed praised Dr. Kratzmann for the skill with which he establishes the connection, I would argue that at times he overemphasises this influence. Ironically, the clearest instance is to be found in the second part of his Henryson chapter. This section, entitled "The English Affinities of the *Morall Fabillis*" is devoted mainly to a comparison between Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale* and Henryson's *The Cock and the Fox*, the only instance in which direct Chaucerian influence is possible. Dr. Kratzmann honestly admits that "the most that can be claimed is that it is at least likely that Chaucer's poem gave Henryson the idea for some of the narrative details of his own work." Yet there are a number of ways in which he covertly overemphasises Chaucerian influence in the *Fabillis*. The first is by dealing at such length with such a minor source. The second is by suggesting that in general terms the style of the *Morall Fabillis* is Chaucerian, a dubious proposition, by no means tested in an analysis which deals only with one fable. Most disturbingly of all, however, the claims of Lydgate and (in particular) Caxton to be influences on Henryson's work are cursorily dismissed. We are told that the *Isopes Fabulae* could only have served Henryson as a negative example, "of what should be avoided rather than imitated." The many particular parallels between Caxton and Henryson are admitted to be "conclusive" evidence of indebtedness but it is suggested that the only real interest a comparison between the two would have is to provide assistance in dating the fables. It is equally possible that Caxton, not Chaucer, is the major English influence on the *Morall Fabillis* and that the whole of

Lydgate's collection could be regarded as, at least, as strong a secondary influence as *The Nun's Priest's Tale*.

If, at times, the influence of Chaucer seems to be overstressed, the influence of Lydgate is certainly minimised. Indeed, there emerges very strongly the idea that he is in some sense the villain of the piece. If indeed his poetic output is so much at odds with the characteristics of Scottish poetry as defined in Chapter One, we should of course expect him to exert very little influence on Scottish poets. Yet Scottish poets regularly admit their debt to him and a number of critics have argued this was by no means lip service. The diminution of Lydgate begins in Chapter One where Dunbar's enthusiastic tribute to him at the end of the *Goldyn Targe* is interpreted as proving "that Dunbar saw his verse as belonging in the company of Chaucer's work rather than Lydgate's." It continues in the *Kingis Quair* chapter. James I properly acknowledged his major debts to Chaucer and Gower. Dr. Kratzmann believes that the omission of Lydgate's name implies a pejorative critical judgment on the part of the author, although elsewhere he interprets such omissions more benevolently. In the Henryson chapter, as I have already discussed, he is dismissed as a "negative exemplum." A much more careful analysis is reserved for the discussion on Dunbar, where it is admitted that Lydgate's poetry may well have had "a greater utilitarian value than Chaucer's for Dunbar" and it is fairly pointed out that almost all of Dunbar's adaptations display greater brevity, structural control and technical excellence than their Lydgatean sources. Yet it is difficult to escape the impression that Lydgate always has to force his claims on Dr. Kratzmann's attention, Chaucer merely suggest them; that Scottish variations from Lydgatean originals almost always imply a negative literary judgment; from Chaucerian originals a critical re-interpretation.

One could add one or two minor reservations. For example, I felt in some instances that the precise pinpointing of the degree to which a Scottish poet was indebted to an English one could only have been achieved by broadening the comparative spectrum; by discussing, in more detail than Dr. Kratzmann was prepared to, other possible European sources. This was certainly the case in his discussions on the *Morall Fabillis*, the *Palice of Honour* and *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*. But overall, I believe this to be a work of high scholarship which gives us an insight into one of the very few periods when Scottish literature could justifiably regard itself as reaching heights unattained in England. Dr. Kratzmann not only provides reasons for this situation, he explores in depth and from a new angle most of the major works of the 15th and 16th

century makars.

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Actes du 2^e Colloque de Langue et Littérature Ecossaises (Moyen Age et Renaissance). Ed. Jean-Jacques Blanchot and Claude Graf. Strasbourg. Université de Strasbourg. 1978. 429 pp.

Contents: John MacQueen, "Myth and the Legends of Lowland Scottish Saints"; Priscilla Bawcutt, "Text and Context in Middle Scots Poetry"; Matthew P. McDiarmid, "The Early Heroic Poetry of Scotland"; Felicity Riddy, "The Revival of Chivalry in Late Medieval Scotland"; William Gillies, "Gaelic and Scots Literature Down to the Reformation"; Dietrich Strauss, "Scots is not Alone: Further Comparative Considerations"; A.J. Aitken, "Oral Narrative Style in Middle Scots"; André Crépin, "From 'Swutol Sang Scopes' to 'Rum, Ram, Ruf': Or the Problems of Alliteration"; Hugh Kirkpatrick, "The Middle English and Middle Scottish Thirteen-Line Bob-Wheel Stanza: A Theory of Origins"; J. Derrick McClure, "The 'Universal Languages' of Thomas Urquhart and George Dalgarno"; A.M. Stewart, "Alain Chartier et l'Ecosse"; Bernice W. Kliman, "John Barbour and Rhetorical Tradition: A Summary"; Catherine van Buuren-Veenbos, "The Early Middle Scots Version of the *Seven Sages of Rome*"; Barrie Ruth Straus, "The Role of the Reader in *The Kingis Quair*"; C.D. Jeffery, "Anglo-Scots Poetry and *The Kingis Quair*"; Lois Ebin, "Henryson's 'Fenyet Fabillis': A Defense of Poetry"; Marilyn R. Mumford, "Merines, Ernstfull Thochtis, and Sad Materis: Kinds of Comedy in Henryson's *Moral Fabillis*"; Maureen Fries, "Besides Crisseid: Henryson's Other Women"; Evelyn S. Newlyn, "Of Sin and Courtliness: Henryson's Tale of the Cock and the Fox"; I. Carruthers, "Henryson's Use of Aristotle and Priscian in the *Moral Fables*"; Marianne Powell, "Henryson, Boethius and Trevet"; Robert L. Kindrick, "Monarchs and Monarchy in the Poetry of Henryson and Dunbar"; Edmund Reiss, "Dunbar's Self-Revelation and Poetic Tradition"; Joanne S. Norman, "The Paradox of Tradition in the Poetry of William Dunbar"; Deanna D. Evans, "Dunbar's *Goldyn Targe*: A Neoplatonic Vision of Nature and Poetry"; W.S. Ramson, "*Ballatis of Theologie*: Godis Gloir and Ouir Salvatioun"; Alice Miskimin, "The Design of Douglas's *Palice of Honour*";

R.J. Lyall, "The Linlithgow Interlude of 1540"; Pierre Janton, "John Knox and Literature."

This volume presents twenty-nine papers read at the 1978 conference on medieval and renaissance Scottish language and literature held at Strasbourg. The range of subjects is quite broad, including papers on topics as diverse as Scottish chivalry (Riddy) and heroic narrative (McDiarmid, Kliman), alliteration (Crépin) and versification (Kirkpatrick), oral narrative style (Aitken), hagiography (MacQueen), the Scottish *Seven Sages of Rome* (van Buuren-Veenenbos), Alain Chartier (Stewart), the Bannatyne MS (Ramson), drama (Lyall), universal language (McClure), the relationship of Gaelic and Scots literature before the Reformation (Gillies), and John Knox as a literary figure (Janton). The essay by Dietrich Strauss is a direct response to Hans Meier's essay in the 1975 Edinburgh volume (see my review in *SSL*, 16, 1981). Finally, almost half of the present volume deals with the makars. The distribution of these essays is somewhat surprising with only one essay (Miskimin) and part of another (Bawcutt) on Douglas, two on *The Kingis Quair* (Straus, Jeffery), three (Reiss, Norman, Evans) and parts of two others (Bawcutt, Kindrick) on Dunbar, and six (Ebin, Mumford, Fries, Newlyn, Carruthers, Powell) and part of another (Kindrick) on Henryson. Four of the Henryson essays deal exclusively with the *Fables* (Ebin, Mumford, Newlyn, Carruthers) as does part of one other (Fries). The increasing popularity of Henryson at the expense of his contemporaries, especially Dunbar, had been suggested by the contents of the Edinburgh volume but is even more pronounced here. Although the reasons for this phenomenon are complex, they owe much to Hugh MacDiarmid's 1973 statement in his selection of Henryson's verse that he now considered Henryson to be Dunbar's superior as a poet. What is surprising is not so much the change from "Not Burns--Dunbar" to "Not Dunbar--Henryson" but rather the rapidity with which the change has been accepted and the apparent absence of any resistance to it; in recent years, bibliographies list more works on Henryson than on the other three makars combined. Since it was MacDiarmid who was largely responsible for the revival of interest in the makars in general and Dunbar in particular, one can hardly begrudge him the right to modify his position. And as the impressive new editions of Henryson and Dunbar by Denton Fox and James Kinsley respectively indicate, scholarly interest in both poets remains high.

In any event, the Henryson essays include two especially valuable studies, those by Ebin and Carruthers respectively. Ebin discusses all of the *Fables*, a formidable task in itself,

and argues that they illustrate two central themes: 1) the value of "feneit fabils," 2) the transformation of man into beast. This essay is filled with incisive local perceptions and its treatment of the *Fables'* overall structure is lucid and persuasive. Carruthers presents a convincing case for Henryson's use of Aristotle (e.g., *Historia Animalium*, *De Somniis*, *De Memoria*, *Ethics*) and Priscian (*Praeexercitamina*); the former provides Henryson with ideas on natural science, psychology, and morals, the latter with practical advice, on the structure of individual fables, for example. Among the other Henryson essays, Fries provides interesting comments on *The Cock and the Fox*, *Orpheus and Eurydice* and *Robene and Makyne*, while Powell usefully reexamines the relationship between *Orpheus and Eurydice* and Trevet's commentary on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.

There is much of interest in the remainder of the volume although the quality varies widely. Among the more notable contributions are those of Priscilla Bawcutt, who presents persuasive textual arguments affecting several of Dunbar's poems; W.S. Ramson, who continues to illuminate, so to speak, the Bannatyne MS; Alice Miskimin, who ingeniously if not altogether convincingly argues for a numerological reading of *The Palice of Honour*; Matthew McDiarmid, who provides a much broader context than that ordinarily used within which to examine the *Bruce*, the *Battle of Otterburn*, and Holland's *Buke of the Howlat*; and John MacQueen, who describes Lowland saints' lives as presenting "living myth" in contradistinction to the romances which "though derived from the same tradition [are] scarcely even corpses" (p. 20).

If one can extrapolate from the 1975 and 1978 volumes, the 1981 conference at Stirling should continue to expand the range of studies in early Scottish language and literature. The importance of these conference volumes to the discipline is indicated by the fact that the essays they contain represent a sizable percentage of all the critical essays on early Scots published in their respective years. In addition to the convenience of gathering together these essays, the conference volumes also demonstrate by juxtaposition the changing emphases in subject matter and critical approach that characterize the field.

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Charles P. Finlayson. *Clement Litill and His Library: The Origins of Edinburgh University Library*. [Edinburgh]. Printed for Edinburgh Bibliographical Society and the Friends of Edinburgh University Library. 1980. 62 pp. Issued to Members.

The name of Clement Litill will doubtless be more familiar to readers of this journal than it is to the reviewer, although I suspect that Mr. C.P. Finlayson's scholarly account of Litill's life draws together so much obscure information that anyone who wishes to profess acquaintance with Litill must inevitably resort to his work. The former Keeper of Manuscripts in the Edinburgh University Library has digested all that can be known of Litill's life from a wide variety of sources and provides an annotated inventory of Litill's books now in the Library.

Clement Litill, the son of an Edinburgh burghess of substantial means, was born around 1527-8 and was incorporated in St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews University, in 1543 where his lifelong interests in canon law and theology must have taken root. After continuing his studies at Louvain University he returned to Edinburgh and was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1553, subsequently appearing before the courts in various capacities during a period of considerable legal and religious activity. Although raised in the "old faith", in 1567 Litill was one of the commissioners for Edinburgh who signed the articles for the legal establishment of Protestantism, amongst other matters, and he supported the King's party when Mary escaped from Lochlever Castle in May 1568. In following years, although never prominent or obtrusive, Litill was always in the thick of affairs; his name appears regularly in the *Register of the Privy Council* in different connections. James's first state entry into Edinburgh in 1579 may have been the occasion of Litill's second gift of a book to the royal library.

During the press of public affairs he had not ceased to add to the library of his student years. The libraries of Robert Reid, Bishop of Orkney, and Andrew Durie, Bishop of Galloway, in 1558, and the looting of the friaries in 1559 furnished volumes for his growing collection, whereas friends were constantly donors: books presented by Lord John Stewart and James Stewart, Earl of Moray, both fellow pupils of Litill at St. Leonard's, could well have been wedding gifts, and a significant acquisition (39 volumes) was from the library of another fellow student, his closest friend, Henry Sinclair, Bishop of Ross. Not only friends, these, but also makers of libraries. On Litill's death in 1580, his theological books

(valued at a thousand marks) were willed to "the Kirk of Edinburgh to be usit and kept to be the said kirk to the use of the ministeris, elderis and decanes thair of" but Litill's brother William, his sole executor, having long been interested in the foundation of a university in Edinburgh, surrendered them to the Town Council as the nucleus of a public theological library. Shortly after the establishment of the Town's College in 1583, however, the library was transferred to that part of Hamilton House later occupied by the Bachelors' Schools, with the Principal as Librarian. Litill's collection became dispersed within the University Library as it grew but the books were gathered together again by David Laing around 1825.

Mr. Finlayson's Inventory of the 276 titles which survive from the original bequest identifies the items in the original inventory and provides notes on their history and bindings, with pressmarks and some bibliographical references. This is work that will not need repeating. The only criticism the handsomely illustrated monograph may evoke concerns the absence of an index to the preliminary account of Clement Litill and the foundation of the Edinburgh University Library. The Edinburgh Bibliographical Society and the Friends of the Library should be congratulated on their joint publication.

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Edmund Reiss. *William Dunbar*. Boston. G.K. Hall. 1979. 183 pp. Twayne's English Authors Series.

Reassessing the entire corpus of William Dunbar's poetry in his volume for Twayne English Authors Series, Edmund Reiss argues that it is difficult to pin down Dunbar as a poet. His work stands out from the other Middle Scots poets' by its "protean" nature. Each poem is unique and we cannot be confident that one poem represents the "real" Dunbar more than any other, or, in fact, that one poem will prepare us for reading another. For these reasons, Reiss argues the traditional approaches to Dunbar's work are unsatisfactory. The dichotomies that we have imposed on his verse in an effort to categorize it--aureate and bawdy, courtly and religious, satiric and moral--are more apparent than real and, for the most part, are of our own making. Reiss suggests, in contrast, that we view Dunbar as a public poet, a craftsman, and above

all as a poet who works firmly within medieval tradition to articulate the accepted truths and values of his time.

In the four central chapters of the book, Reiss provides new categories for Dunbar's poems which allow him to dispose of some of the earlier views and to direct our attention to the main concerns of his verse. Chapter II, "The Poet and the Narrator," dismisses the biographical and personal readings of Dunbar's poems and reassesses several works in terms of the speakers Dunbar develops and the traditions upon which he draws. Chapters III, IV, and V consider Dunbar in turn from the perspectives of court poet, Christian moralist, and love poet. As a court poet, Reiss suggests, Dunbar's main contribution is to transform the particular, fleeting occasions he addresses into enduring events by his shrewd manipulation of style and rhetorical devices. As a moralist and also as a love poet, Dunbar emphasizes the underlying mutability of worldly experience, returning in the moral poems to eternal values and truths and in the love poems to a definition of right and wrong love.

This format enables Reiss to provide a sensible review of almost all of Dunbar's poems, one which is more steady and even-handed than the other book-length studies and which affords a better introduction to the poet than any single specialized investigation. In dealing with the individual poems, Reiss covers the important issues and maintains a reasonable balance between background information and criticism. His analysis is often incisive, particularly when he turns to some of the neglected lyrics like "On His Heid-Ake" (no. 3) and "Of Content" (no. 70). But Reiss's method also reduces Dunbar's poetry to an evenness which is deceptive. By giving all of the poems roughly equal attention, he tends to slight many of the major poems. "The Flyting" (no. 6) and "I, Maister Andro Kennedy" (no. 40), for example, each receive only brief notice which does not adequately represent their significance.

In his effort to counteract the excesses of the biographical critics, Reiss sometimes moves too far to the opposite extreme, dismissing information which is essential to an understanding of the poems. Although Reiss argues in the case of "Now lythis off ane gentill knyght" (no. 35), Dunbar's poem about the fool Sir Thomas Norny, that knowing who Norny really was is of little importance to the poem or to our appreciation of its humor, we benefit considerably from this information in interpreting the poem. Similarly, as Hay's articles reveal, the antagonism between Dunbar and John Damian, the Italian alchemist whom James IV made Abbot of Tunland and who in 1507 unsuccessfully attempted to fly from Stirling Castle to

France, is more essential to an understanding of the two Damian poems (nos. 38-39) than Reiss admits. At times, Reiss's reluctance to acknowledge the validity of the biographical approach leads him to rather tenuous conclusions. Perhaps the best example of this problem is his treatment of Dunbar's short "Complaint to the King aganis Mure" (no. 5). Rejecting the common view that Mure is a rival poet of Dunbar's acquaintance, Reiss argues that "Muris" refers in general terms to the Blackamoors or perhaps to the moors, the wastelands, most likely those of Scotland. On the basis of this speculation, he concludes that "Dunbar may be referring to the culprit as a Scotsman; and, if indeed the culprit is a creation of the poet, he may well be the poet himself." This view finally requires an even greater effort of the imagination than many of the biographical explanations and will perhaps prompt readers to recall Bawcutt's recent warning about the interpretation of Dunbar texts.¹

In qualifying the traditional classification of Dunbar's poems, Reiss substitutes some equally imperfect alternatives. In contrast to the previous generation of critics who have admired the bawdy and satiric Dunbar, Reiss highlights the moral Dunbar, suggesting that behind the great variety of his stances and strategies lies a consistency of moral vision, summed up in the simple prayer, "Salviour, suppois" (no. 78). Imposing a new scheme on Dunbar's poems, Reiss suggests that this prayer is Dunbar's "Parson's Tale." The poem "functions as Dunbar's final statement of Truth and should be held up against the ironic ambiguities, poses and half-truths seen by and large in his other writings." In his attempt to characterize Dunbar, Reiss thus unavoidably introduces another generalization which some may choose to question. For this reason, he is on firmer ground in his very interesting last chapter when he puts aside his categories and asks new questions about Dunbar's methods as a poet. In this concluding section, Reiss points Dunbar's criticism in several new and useful directions by his consideration of Dunbar's craft, particularly by his suggestions about Dunbar's manipulation of the spoken voice, his exploitation of movement in the poems, and his technical strategies.

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NOTES

¹Priscilla Bawcutt, "Text and Context in Middle Scots Poetry," *Actes du 2e Colloque de Langue et de Littérature*

Écossaises (Moyen Age et Renaissance) (Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg, 1978), pp. 26-38.

Dietrich Strauss. *Die erotische Dichtung von Robert Burns*. Frankfurt am Main and Bern. Verlag Peter Lang. 1981. 340 pp. Neue Studien zur Anglistik and Amerikanistik. Band 22.

Students of Burns should be grateful to Dr. Strauss for this comprehensive discussion of a very significant part of the master's work, his "erotic poetry," the term "erotic" here indicating those poems that present sexual experience in the most explicit way. Much of this discussion, by no means the whole, concerns the collection published in 1799 (perhaps by Peter Hill) without author's name, and entitled *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. About the attribution of the work to Burns there is less and less argumentation though still some editorial reservations of a mainly theoretical kind; thus James Kinsley in his edition feels obliged to accept as Burns's only those poems that also have the authority of manuscript or early attribution. But such reservations, as Dr. Strauss convincingly argues, are essentially subjective, not much differing from the reason for Kinsley's rejection of "The Bonniest Lass," found in *The Gibley Pye* of 1806, that it lacks the poet's characteristic "energy and concentration"--a response that neither Dr. Strauss nor this reviewer can share. The more decided and consistent position of De Lancey Ferguson seems preferable, that all poems in the *Merry Muses* should be assigned to Burns until otherwise proven. Their inclusion in the canon, as Strauss observes, should surprise no one: unquestioned work can be every bit as frankly sexual as anything in the 1799 collection.

Dr. Strauss's important contribution to Burns criticism, however, is his appreciation of the variety and quality of the poet's writing in this kind, his demonstration of the art, and particularly the scope of significant content, given to these poems, and the intense humanity that they exhibit. It is not sex *per se*, treated in prurient isolation as Shakespeare, for example, treats it in his *Venus and Adonis*, that Burns offers. Evident as is his enjoyment of the sexual act, and his supremacy in its expression--"Corn rigs, an' barley rigs, / An' corn rigs are bonnie," etc.--it is above all the human ambience of sex that he feels and sees. What it means to be human, at the simplest levels of living and feeling, is after all, as the German critic perceives, the central theme of Burns's inspira-

tion. For this reason indeed the description "erotic" can be as misleading and misapplied as the title of the 1799 collection. These stanzas, all from different poems in the so-called *Merry Muses*, should clarify this point and make plain Dr. Strauss's meaning. What they all convey, by metaphor, question or statement, is feeling for an aspect of the human situation as sexually illustrated.

The Mouse is a merry wee beast,
 The Moudiewart wants the een;
 And O' for a touch o' the thing
 I had in my nieve yestream.
 ("Brose and Butter")

* * *

Fu' lightly lap ye o'er the knowe,
 And thro' the wood ye sang, lassie;
 But herrying o' the foggie byke,
 I fear ye've got a stang, lassie.
 ("Ye hae Lien Wrang, Lassie")

* * *

Wap and row, wap and row,
 Wap and row the feetie o't,
 I thought I was a maiden fair
 Till I heard the greetie o't.
 ("The Reel o' Stumpie")

* * *

And why shouldna poor folk mowe, mowe, mowe,
 And why shouldna poor folk mowe:
 The great folk hae siller, and houses and lands,
 Poor bodies hae naething but mowe.
 ("Poor Bodies do Naething
 but M - w")

* * *

But you that is Called and Free,
 Elekit and chosen a saunt,
 Will't break the Eternal Decree
 Whatever ye do wi' your cunt?
 ("The Case of Conscience")

A girl's desires--Burns, the critic observes, seems to be alone in his time in recognising female desire in other than a comic spirit--the contrary realities of unwanted pregnancy and a crying "bairn," the wretched poverty that at least finds forgetfulness in sex, the ridicule not only of a Calvinist doctrine (for the most part no longer central to the teachings of the Church) but of any religious position that denies or disprizes the sexual drive, are a few of the directions that Burns's theme takes; others that cannot be illustrated here relate to government, class distinction, war and peace. Dr. Strauss rightly notes that the peculiar bias of these poems has much to do with the social anarchism voiced in "Love and Liberty" ("The Jolly Beggars") and is indeed a base from which the poet advances in his "official" poems to a fuller criticism of the unnatural, and celebration of the healthy, in the more complex relations of social life. Study of the comparatively neglected erotica helps us to understand better the ultimate scope and direction of his genius. It is this sexual base of Burns's criticism of life that allows him to be in Strauss's phrase "one of the great emancipators."

The general trend of such an argument is just and illuminating. It is, as might be expected, the writer's commentary on the Scottish scene that invites criticism. In the lifetime of Burns Scotland was practically and intellectually the most progressive of European societies, so that it will not do to relate Burns's emergency to the encouragement of a supposed "provincialism." Possibly in this error Dr. Strauss merely follows such Scottish critics as Edwin Muir and Hugh MacDiarmid who romantically oppose "farmer Burns" to the literati of the day. But with differences only of stress and application they shared the same fund of ideas. He says much of the narrowing and depressive influence of the Church, with only slight mention of the dominant New Light faction, which was liberal enough to entertain both Hume and Burns. About the anti-Establishment, and even republican, sentiments in some sections of it he says nothing. He mistakenly, if naturally, supposes Burns, for social reasons and his distance from the capital, to have enjoyed a closer intimacy with the "folk-tradition" in song than did men who belonged to the class of Lord Hailes and Walter Scott. What was known in the peasant's cottage was also known, and often improved in Burnsian fashion, in the laird's house. It is one of Dr. Strauss's criticisms of Scottish society that it took little interest in music, but both Italian and German composers were well known, and in one sphere, of course, Scotland had early set the example for Europe, the collection and study of folk-song. For historical reasons he describes the Scottish language as a

("Peter Bell the Third")

We have to thank Dr. Strauss for making clear the full import of that appreciation.

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Marinell Ash. *The Strange Death of Scottish History*. Edinburgh. The Ramsay Head Press. 1980. 167 pp.; footnotes, bibliography, but no index.

The merit of this book is best seen if it is regarded as a collection of essays on "Scottish Historiography in the earlier 19th Century": (1) The General Register House and the pioneer archivist Thomas Thomson; (2) the clubs for publishing source material--Bannatyne, Maitland, Abbotsford, Iona, Spalding, Wodrow, Spottiswoode; (3) Patrick Fraser Tytler, historian of Scotland: his family, his life, his work and its tribulations. Although not exhaustive (this is a short book), these essays bring together many interesting facts, previously widely scattered. It is the first and last chapters which are less than satisfactory.

Chapter I gives an account of Scott and his predecessors in the historical field. A large part of it reviews the historiography of Scotland before 1371, treating the legendary kings, the Culdee Controversy, Thomas Innes, Sibbald, Clerk of Penicuik, and David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes. The historiography of the later periods is not mentioned. Yet these later periods were Scott's chief concern! Certainly he was good on the Later Middle Age (Norman period onwards)--witness his *Sir Tristrem*, the crusading novels, his devotion to Froissart--but in the annals of the Dark Age he had little interest, making a joke of them in *The Antiquary*, the novel in which Oldbuck and Wardour quarrel about the Picts. This curious imbalance may possibly be referable to the fact that Dr. Ash is herself a mediaevalist.

About Scott himself, Dr. Ash states that the main influence on him in the field of history was Alexander F. Tytler. Although he certainly attended Tytler's lectures, he seldom, if ever, refers to Tytler's dry work, which is therefore almost certainly of no importance for Scott. On the other hand, the work of the 18th century historians who *are* frequently cited by Scott, such as Hume and Robertson, is dismissed by Dr. Ash

(p. 24) as "endlessly repetitive, or subordinate to philosophical generalities." This is a strange thing to say about these brilliant writers, so long and widely admired on the Continent as well as at home, and still so stimulating by virtue of their wide views, compelling narrative, and trenchant analysis.

The devotion of these men to authentic source material is also greatly undervalued by Dr. Ash: "The great innovation of...the early 19th Century was the study of history through original sources" (p. 9). One simply cannot accept this; even John Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland* is supported by documents; and what about old Wodrow? His history of covenanting tribulations is overwhelmingly documented, and incidentally deals very largely with common people, long before the romantic movement drew them from their alleged obscurity.

Dr. Ash generalises at some length about Scott and history, but avoids the concrete; there is no reference to Scott's important historical work--*Somers Tracts*, Dryden, Swift, *Grandfather*. The statement (p. 13) that "the romantic revolution in historical writing was born of Scott and Scotland" runs counter to the present-day tendency to regard Scott as an unwilling romantic, dragged along with the movement instead of leading it.

In her last chapter, Dr. Ash presents an argument which seems to run as follows: (1) Round about 1850, internal squabbles among the Scots rose to an unexampled level of intensity--Whig vs. Tory; 1707 unionist vs. nationalist; Protestant vs. Catholic; Presbyterian vs. Episcopalian; Auld Kirk vs. Free Kirk; Old Catholics vs. Irish Catholics; Old Episcopalians vs. Anglicans; (2) In consequence of (1), the Scottish national consciousness was hopelessly fragmented; (3) In consequence of (2), serious (as opposed to sentimental) Scottish historians lost their hold on the general reader; (4) In consequence of (3)(?), the Scottish historians after Tytler were not as good as he was; (5) Also in consequence of (3), the amateur publishing clubs inspired by Scott gave way to professionally-run bodies, more specialised in their appeal.

This is a provocative set of propositions, opening up a rich field for discussion. The basic proposition must be shown to be true; each consequence must be shown to be true to fact; and the causal links must be demonstrated. But in fact, space does not permit Dr. Ash to do much more than state her propositions. We are disappointed, for example, to find no account of the inferiority of Hill Burton, the first of the "dead" historians, who has impressed other observers as a throw-back to the great 18th Century; and we should have liked

some information about what has happened to historians and their audience in other countries, to point a contrast.

Can one detect signs of an anti-presbyterian, even anti-protestant, bias in this book? Dr. Ash records that W.B. Turnbull was witch-hunted out of his editorial work on the *Calendars of State Papers* (Reformation period) because he was a Roman Catholic, but she does not mention his violently pro-Catholic editorial commentary, which really was too provocative to be passed over in the official publications of a country still governed under the Revolution Settlement of 1689.

In spite of the foregoing strictures on parts of this book, it is welcome as a pioneer venture into the neglected study of Scottish historiography. One hopes it may start a movement.

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Roland Hall. *Fifty Years of Hume Scholarship: a Bibliographic Guide*. Edinburgh. University Press. [1978]. x + 150 pp.

Professor Hall previously published *A Hume Bibliography* (1971) which was supplemented by "More Hume Bibliography" in the *Philosophical Quarterly* (1976, 26:92-100). The present volume incorporates his earlier work with a great deal of new material, including a valuable essay on the development of Hume scholarship. "The main part of the catalogue provides a record of the critical work on Hume published from 1925 to 1976." It is preceded by ten pages listing the main writings on Hume from 1900 through 1924. The listings include books, dissertations, articles in journals and reviews. The volume concludes with author, language and subject indexes, and there are helpful cross-references to related pieces.

As a test of completeness, the entries for journal articles for the year 1973 in the present bibliography were compared with the items listed under 'Hume' in the 1973 cumulative edition of *The Philosopher's Index*. Of 39 articles listed in Professor Hall's volume, nine were not listed in any volume of *The Philosopher's Index*. The latter catalogued 41 items for 1973, of which 17 were included nowhere in *Fifty Years of Hume Scholarship*. Of these 17, however, several were papers which

their published abstracts suggested have greater relevance to problems raised by Hume than to Hume's work itself. Probably Professor Hall's criterion for inclusion is the stricter.

Professor Hall has continued his work in listings of the Hume literature for 1977, 1978 and 1979 in *Hume Studies* (1978, 4:86-91; 1979, 5:131-138; 1980, 6:162-170). These additional listings include addenda to earlier years and reviews.

For earlier materials, students of Hume will continue to need T.E. Jessop's *A Bibliography of David Hume and of Scottish Philosophy from Francis Hutcheson to Lord Balfour* (1938, reissued, 1966, by Russell and Russell), but they will find the present volume an indispensable tool for their work.

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E.W. Mellow. *Edwin Muir*. Boston. Twayne. 1979. 181 pp.

Christopher Wiseman. *Beyond the Labyrinth: A Study of Edwin Muir's Poetry*. Victoria, British Columbia. Sono Nis Press. 1978. 252 pp.

Edwin Muir. *Scottish Journey*. Ed. T.C. Smout. Edinburgh. Mainstream. 1979. xx + 250 pp.

The rhetoric of Muir's autobiographies is perhaps partly responsible for the persistence of the "old-fashioned life-and-writings approach" to his work, which Edwin Mellow explicitly adopts in *Edwin Muir*. By naturalising their own production and offering as simple remembrance what is in fact calculated construction, the autobiographies tempt the critic to view them as repositories of accurate information, and to use them uncritically to elucidate the poetry. Certainly Professor Mellow sometimes acts as though *An Autobiography* is a simple transcription of an antecedent reality rather than a complex mediation of it. For instance, he repeats as biographical fact the story in the autobiography of Muir's earliest sense of sin, which the autobiographer says issued from his young self's inability to know whether he had touched the sack of sheep-dip his father had explicitly commanded him not to touch. In what ways this incident relates to other incidents of purification in the autobiography, in what ways it derives as much from other autobiographical literature as

from personal experience, do not seem pertinent questions if one believes the autobiographies "serve as glosses to the novels and to many of the poems." A work which is itself an explanation (*OED* definition of "gloss") of other works is in no need of careful explanation itself.

It is especially disappointing that Professor Mellow should be so relatively unalert to the nature and quality of the prose, since *Edwin Muir* (part of the Twayne's English Authors Series, contributions to which survey the whole work of the subject) is the first book for some time to devote space to the prose works in their own right. After a brief introductory chapter of biographical information, and before centering his attention on the poetry in the final three chapters, the author devotes two chapters to what he calls Muir's expository prose, and a chapter to the three novels and two autobiographies. The book is completed by a Selected Bibliography, which includes a complete list of Muir's books, and of his and Willa's translations, and an annotated selection of secondary sources.

The sweep of *Edwin Muir* is comprehensive, summaries of most of the important writings are given, and even the most minor ones are mentioned. Professor Mellow's assiduousness can be gauged by chapter two, "The Professional Journalist," with its sections on Muir's book reviews, *John Knox*, *Scottish Journey*, *Social Credit and the Labour Party* and other minor works, and the Muirs' translations of a number of writers, including Feuchtwanger, Broch, and Kafka. Professor Mellow is particularly good on the importance to Muir of Kafka, suggesting that Muir recognised in Kafka's writings some of his own concerns, and that the act of translation enabled Muir to clarify and focus them better. In essence, the case is that Muir's translations belong to his creative rather than journalistic work--such distinctions are explicit in the author's argument--and that in one light Kafka acted as a mask behind which Muir could apprehend and clarify his own emergent interests. It is only a pity that Professor Mellow does not read much of Muir's other prose writings, which he either dismisses as "journalism" or understands primarily as literary criticism, in the same way. For instance, although in his discussion of *Essays on Literature and Society* (1949) Professor Mellow does discuss essays in the collection, drawing attention to the ways they bear not merely on their subjects but also on Muir's recurrent concerns, he shows no awareness that, say, the structure of the volume, the order of the essays, reveals Muir's attempt to clarify that movement of history which he explores in his poetry and "creative" prose. The overarching movement of the volume, from "Robert Henryson," the first

essay, with its stress on Henryson's participation in "a great age of settlement" in which everything seems "to have its place" to the final essay, "Natural and Political Man," with its vision of the reduction of modern man to a "thinking animal," is a recognisable movement in a number of Muir's works. The first words of the volume, a description of Henryson's world as one in which "the imagination could attain harmony and tranquillity," are echoed at the volume's end in the discussion of the reciprocity of mind and nature in Wordsworth's poetry, which promises "the possibility of harmony." A close analysis of *Essays on Literature and Society* would show the unity of the volume, and would encourage us to recognise this volume as merely another of the forms in which Muir tried to formulate his persistent interests.

One of the disadvantages of Professor Mellown's organisation of his book, of his decision to separate poetry from prose, is that he makes it difficult for himself and his readers to see how interrelated are the prose and the poetry. His summary of *Scottish Journey* (1935) appears early in the book, his analysis of the volume of poetry, *Journeys and Places* (1937), appears much later. If his organising principle had been the historical ordering of Muir's work, Professor Mellown might have, discussing the two works in close proximity, noticed how Muir's travel book and its organization, moving between description of travelling and places, is a rehearsal for the ordering of the volume of poetry.

Although Professor Mellown rightly relates Muir's three novels to the autobiography, *The Story and the Fable*, suggesting that what Muir explored in the novels he examined openly in the autobiography, "without the disguises that are found in the novels," he does so in an overly simple manner. For Professor Mellown, in each of the novels there is "a young man who in spite of apparent differences actually portrays the author." In one sense, it is his unresponsiveness to the autobiography which leads Professor Mellown to a simple reading of the novels. If he recognised in the autobiography how Muir dramatises his "hygienic" Glasgow socialist self, with his faith in the future cleansing of all men, repressing the guilt and shame of his family's deaths and the squalor of the city until his psychoanalysis in London, if he saw how the autobiography is in that "divided self" tradition of Scottish literature, which include's Hogg's *Private Memoirs* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll*, he would have given more adequate accounts of the novels. For instance, in *Poor Tom* the two brothers are projections of a divided self, Mansie with his obsession with cleanliness, and Tom with his brutish behaviour, rather than Mansie a disguised portrait of Muir.

Professor Mellow's account of the poetry is more satisfactory than his explanations of the prose. The first of the three poetry chapters looks at the verse composed in the 1920s and 1930s, the second at those poems written just before Muir's "important religious experience of 1939," and the final chapter at the poems in *The Labyrinth* and later volumes, including those listed as "Poems not Previously Collected" in *Collected Poems* (1960). The account of *The Labyrinth* volume can be warmly recommended. He argues persuasively that the volume is not merely a collection of poems, but has an internal coherence, drawing particular attention to the structural use of the sonnets in the overall shape of the volume. In his examination of Muir's other poetry, he moves through the different volumes, summarising themes, marshalling the insights of other critics, and sensibly surveying the poetic *oeuvre*. The format of the Twayne series does not encourage its authors to linger for any length of time over a single work.

As in the prose chapters, so in the poetry chapters, Professor Mellow offers the life as the relevant context. Such a biographical approach often ensures that his generalisations about Muir's poetry, especially about its relation to other poetry and to poetic tradition, lack sufficient surrounding argument to support them. "Tradition" is, for instance, an important word in Muir's vocabulary, and Professor Mellow is right to draw our attention to it. But what is one to make of the following? Muir is a "poet of traditional religious wisdom"; his poems "reflect not his age, but rather traditional wisdom"; Muir's poems of his later years "link him with those traditional poets like Vaughan, Blake, and Wordsworth." Professor Mellow acts as though the meaning of the word "traditional" in these contexts is self-evident. It clearly is not. In what sense, for instance, can Vaughan, Blake, and Wordsworth be said to belong to a tradition? What is "traditional wisdom"? How does it relate to "traditional religious wisdom"?

In *Beyond the Labyrinth: A Study of Edwin Muir's Poetry*, Christopher Wiseman sets his face against the life-and-writings approach, which Professor Mellow promotes, hoping that his twofold aim, to place Muir's poetry "squarely in the tradition of post-symbolist poetry," and to look in some detail at much of the later poetry, will "help shift the emphasis from heavily biographical criticism to the individual poems, many of which have previously been ignored." An opening chapter which sketches Muir's life is followed by two chapters, on "The Poetic Symbol," an account of the nature of symbol and of symbolist poetry, and on the early poetry (to the early 1940s), before the substance of the book is devoted to the later poetry: *The Labyrinth*, *One Foot in Eden*, and

"Poems not Previously Collected" (*Collected Poems*, 1960).

Beyond the Labyrinth is an uneven book, in which its author offers interesting and persuasive readings of individual poems and, sometimes, volumes of poetry, but does not quite persuade either this reader, or, I am inclined to believe, himself, that Muir is a post-symbolist poet. There are two meanings of symbolist poetry which jostle for dominance in Professor Wiseman's argument. One thread of argument suggests that symbolist poets aspire to "the vision of Eden, of harmony, of the past existing in the present, of eternal time, of the dream and the unconscious, of the transcending symbol." In terms of this definition Dante, Blake, Yeats and Muir are all symbolists. In the other thread of argument, symbolist poetry is a much more historically delimited manifestation, referring to a cluster of poetic practices, particularly certain uses of syntax and of tense, which are associated with Mallarmé and a number of other French poets. Professor Wiseman further complicates this dual definition of symbolist poetry--as a trans-historical category and a poetic practice produced in nineteenth-century France--by admitting that, after all, Muir is "not a symbolist poet all the time," and *then* using the term "visionary" to describe him.

For all his insistence that he wishes to offer a context for Muir's poetry other than the life, in the opening chapter he does draw on *An Autobiography* as though it is the life, saying of Muir's move from Orkney to Glasgow that "It is no wonder that the Fall, the sudden sickening removal from the land of wholeness and timelessness, should have come to dominate his thought and his symbology." Christopher Wiseman does not seem to consider that what he calls Muir's great symbols, "Eden, the Fall, the labyrinth, the journey," which he feels come inescapably from the life--using *An Autobiography* as evidence--may owe as much to literary tradition as to the life. If one reads M.H. Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism*, a mapping of the concerns of Romantic and post-Romantic literature, with its entries on, for instance, the Fall, and "the circuitous journey," one might suggest that Muir's symbols are the common possession of Romantic writers. To suggest this is not to denigrate Muir's achievement, but to propose that Muir's symbolism is his insofar as he makes individual use of a Romantic inheritance.

An awareness of such a context for Muir's work would have been one of the ways in which Professor Wiseman might have given substance to his use of such terms as the "unconscious." It is difficult to know how to respond to the comment about the poem, "The Song," that "it seems to derive mainly from the unconscious," when we have been given no account of what

Professor Wiseman understands by the term. If the critic believes that a poem, a verbal construct, comes from the unconscious, he must have some theory of the relation of language to the unconscious. If he has, he does not say what it is. Freud is not mentioned, Jung merits only one reference, and contemporary psychoanalytic critics such as Jacques Lacan, who offer theoretical accounts of language and the unconscious, are noticeably absent. Professor Wiseman does not even try to illuminate what Muir himself meant by the term. He could have usefully followed up the reference to dream literature--to Browne, De Quincey and Coleridge--in a letter of Muir's, 1 July 1939.

The most impressive chapter is the one devoted to *The Labyrinth*. It not only contains fine close readings of the title poem and many of the other poems, but also confronts what seems to me one of the central questions concerning Muir: the negotiation in his work--sometimes the confusion--of the realms of politics, self, and religion. The poems in *The Labyrinth*, written in Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1948, the years following the Nazi occupation and culminating in the Russian *coup*, are at one and the same time saturated in the political events of the time, "the record of a human-being moving sluggishly in the darkness of his own spiritual crisis", and "a universal statement of man's relationship with evil and his instinctive, insistent craving for the numinous." What one wishes to clarify is the status of historical action in Muir's work. Does he see, say, the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in historical terms, as a unique historical action? Or does he see it as merely another instance of the Fall within the religious pattern of innocence/fall/redemption? Or does he see such an event as an objectification of his own experience of Fall which, to quote Christopher Wiseman, "he had experienced in the labyrinths of the Glasgow slums." Although I am not persuaded that Professor Wiseman has successfully clarified the relationships between the realms, he does see the need for such an enquiry and prosecutes it. One ought to add, though, that he is clearly wrong to say that the poems of *The Labyrinth* "are informed...with a political awareness new in Muir's work."

Perhaps Professor Wiseman means "poetry" by "work," since politics and history are clearly at the centre of Muir's earlier prose work--one thinks, for instance, of the chapter in *Poor Tom* in which Muir meditates on the relationship between socialism and Christianity, or of *Scottish Journey*. This work has been recently reissued for the first time since its publication by a small Scottish press with the financial aid of the Scottish Arts Council. As if to emphasise the travel book's political character, the publisher invited T.C.

Smout, a Professor of Economic History, to introduce it, rather than a literary critic. Professor Smout, who believes that *Scottish Journey* "is very seriously concerned about identity, the economic order and the political plight of Scotland," offers an introduction which rehearses the personal, economic and political background against which the volume was written. The economic plight of Scotland in the 1930s, the struggle between various forms of socialism and nationalism, and the social position of Muir, "an in-between person...a man of indefinable class position...caught up in this nationalist movement and detached from it...a Hampstead-living Orcadian whose young political conversion...had drawn him in the direction of a variety of socialist and quasi-socialist ideas current in the south"--all this is excellently described. Yet I would wish to dissent from Professor Smout's conclusion that "Muir's socialism was of the heart rather than the head," and suggest, rather, that Muir's socialism was a significant and valuable amendment to the dominant versions of socialism of the 1930s. Let me take an instance. The socialist explanations of history available to Muir were those found in socialist evolutionism, which, to quote the historian E.P. Thompson "borrowed improperly from the natural sciences and Darwin," and in Stalinism, which conceived of history as a process which moves, irrespective of the agency of the actors, towards a predestined end, socialism. (Muir wrote an essay "Bolshevism and Calvinism" in 1934.) In the two versions of the autobiography and in *Poor Tom*, through the symbol of the tram Muir tries to give concrete expression to the implications for human experience of such an understanding of the historical process. There is, for example, in *Poor Tom* an extraordinary scene, in which the socialist Mansie, eyes fixed on a perfect future, and his dying brother, Tom, stand before tramlines as a tram "ground past them, continuously pulverising some invisible and piteous object which hovered just before the dust in front of it." It is a measure of Muir's understanding that in 1960 Edward Thompson, the Marxist historian, should, looking back on the socialism of the 1930s, use the train/tram analogy to try to express the terrible disregard for the individual human life which the Stalinist view of history entails:

...history cannot be compared to a tunnel through which an express races until it brings its freight of passengers out into sunlit plains. Or, if it can be, then generation upon generation of passengers are born, live in the dark, and die while the train is still within the tunnel. An historian must surely be more interested than the teleologists allow him to be in the quality of life, the suf-

ferings and satisfactions of those who live and die in unredeemed time.

("Peculiarities of the English")

Scottish Journey is itself a fine book. Muir was not, of course, alone among poets and novelists of the 1930s who wrote travel books--one thinks of Auden and Isherwood's *Journey to a War*, Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* and Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*. It is as if a restlessness with the dominant literary forms encouraged 'thirties writers to experiment with "non-literary" forms. Certainly a letter Muir wrote to Sydney Schiff in 1938 about *The Story and the Fable*, in which he states that he might "have found at last a form that suits me," suggests that the biography, *John Knox*, the novels, and the travel book were attempts to find forms in which he might apprehend and express his concerns. In the same letter to Schiff, Muir says of *The Story and the Fable* that it is "an attempt to find out what a human being is in this extraordinary age which depersonalises everything." To read *Scottish Journey* in the light of this comment is to recognise immediately how the same quest informs the travel book.

In the Glasgow chapter, Muir, writing of the willingness of the authorities to allow people to live at starvation levels, and of the various contemporary arguments about the exact subsistence level, asks "on what a human being could live":

To compel people to live in starvation can be argued to be more cruel than to let them die of starvation as their ancestors did in the eighteenth century....It is certain that any intelligent man at that time would have been hard put to it to lay down *on what a human being could live*, and would probably have considered it presumptuous to do so: but this problem provides no difficulty to a medical commission now, except after the publication of its report. But once the report is available--and this is the real evil--all thought of the human beings it concerns vanish: they become mere digestive systems.

On what a human being can live is the subject of *Scottish Journey*, not jostling for prominence with other subjects, but the organising principle of the work. Each of the chapters focussing on a different part of Scotland, has at its centre the clarification of this question. The relationship of man to the human world, to the natural world, and to the animal world, all recurring questions in *Scottish Journey*, are all

expressions of the one, for Muir, abiding question.

These books under review prompt certain conclusions about the state of Muir studies. Certainly, the weakness of Professor Mellow's approach suggests that any adequate assessment of Muir cannot continue to rely on the life to elucidate the writing--or at least cannot do so if the life is restricted effectively to Muir's own interpretation of it in his autobiography. The autobiography is not a "life," a transparent representation of prior experience, but is as complex a piece of writing as the best of the poems, needing the same close analysis. Professor Smout's introduction to *Scottish Journey* reminds us also that the "life" is a more complex matter than the usual accounts allow. It includes Muir's position *vis-à-vis* Scottish metropolitan culture, his class position, his exile from Scotland in England and Europe, and his involvement in socialist and nationalist movements. Muir's poetic life, his poetry and its relation to poetic tradition might be said to be Professor Wiseman's subject. Yet for all his impressive demonstration that Muir's poetry responds well to the rigours of practical criticism, he does not, I think, name and describe the literary and poetic determinants of Muir's poetry, does not, in short, realise in detail Muir's poetic life. What we still await is a book which offers a sustained account of the poetry *and* the prose, and identifies not only the biographical, but also the aesthetic and social determinants of Muir's impressive achievement.

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