

Book Reviews

David Palmer and Malcolm Bradbury, eds., *Shakespearian Comedy* (Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 14). London: Edward Arnold, 1972. pp. 247. Paperback \$5.50.

This volume contains ten essays, by various hands, on the comedies of the first half of Shakespeare's career. By the editors' count and listing in the preface these comedies number ten, up to and including *Measure for Measure*: apparently *All's Well* and *Troilus and Cressida* either do not exist or come in one of Shakespeare's later phases. The editors explain that of their ten *The Comedy of Errors*, *Taming of the Shrew* and *Merry Wives of Windsor* are not treated in detail only because of the volume's "prevailing interest in the more 'romantic' plays." However, it seems fairly likely that this prevailing interest manifested itself only after the contributors had done their stuff and the editors saw what they had in hand. When contributions on a special topic are solicited from a repertory company of critics, it should be possible to exercise tight editorial control in assigning and holding authors to their parts in a scheme; but in the case of this volume there is a strong suspicion that the editors simply announced the theme and then roped together with a Preface what came in.

Left pretty well at large, the contributors to Number 14 range freely, and often cross one another's paths. At least four of them can be found complaining, in passing, about the denouement of *Measure for Measure*. Now and then there is a minor collision. For example, John Russell Brown writes in "The Presentation of Comedy" that although Shakespeare created Dogberry for Will Kemp and thus could have left the actor to flesh out a mere sketch, nevertheless Dogberry shows the playwright's close study of an individual and a type. Gareth Lloyd Evans, on the other hand ("Shakespeare's Fools"), wonders whether Shakespeare did not write at least part of *Much Ado* "in absolute and well-judged servility to the known values of Kemp's comic genius." What both these critics have to say is worth reading, though, and Brown remembers the plays his editors forgot.

Brown and Gareth Lloyd Evans have chiefly been preoccupied with Shakespeare in performance. Inga-Stina Ewbank's essay treats *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as more a reader's than a spectator's play. She suggests the ideal reader was George Eliot, who found in the play a reflection of her emotional perturbation at the time of reading and was "disgusted" by its revelation of what love and friendship do to people and make people do to each other. Those of us who suspect that inside every thin Shakespearian play there's a fat Shakespearian play trying to get out must sympathise with Ewbank's effort to show that if *Two Gentlemen* is not a success then at least it isn't a failure.

The Merchant of Venice (D. J. Palmer), *Measure for Measure* (Jocelyn Powell) and *Love's Labour's Lost* are the other plays which have chapters to themselves. In John Dixon Hunt's essay on *Love's Labour's Lost* it is satisfying to see the Arden editor of that play chastised for neglecting its meaning. Hunt recommends less attention be paid to the tedious School of Night and more to the courtly values embodied in the play. R. A. Foakes, writing on "Voices of Maturity" in the comedies, illuminates the roles of Theseus and Jaques. But though he crushes *Twelfth Night* a little it will not quite bow to him, especially as his thesis makes him read Toby Belch rather insensitively. Foakes' "sane and reasonable" Jaques has little to do with A. D. Nuttall's rendering of that character in "Two Unassimilable Men," an essay which brilliantly ranges through literary family trees and other dense undergrowth in search of a relationship between Jaques and Caliban. "At least as different as chalk and cheese" is the conclusion, though they embody respectively sexual tension and sexual exclusion. In passing, Nuttall suggests sexual deviance in Prospero, Orlando and Rosalind (Leslie Fiedler is nearby, and puts in an appearance on p. 223). A great deal of critical subtlety goes into proving that there's something fishy about Caliban.

Stanley Wells's "Shakespeare Without Sources" never strays from the central area of this volume's concern. He uses resemblances between the three "original" comedies to suggest the characteristic workings of Shakespeare's mind and his preoccupation with his own art. And for the benefit of fellow contributors who are unhappy about *Measure for Measure*, Jocelyn Powell makes very good sense of this play in "Theatrical 'trompe l'oeil' in *Measure for Measure*," tracing the logical movement toward the culminating act of forgiveness which Isabella must find in herself to perform. Powell also is very sensitive to the atmospheric poetry of the play, though in common with practically every other critic of *Measure for Measure* looks scantily and grudgingly at the words Isabella uses to beg for Angelo's life. The assertion "She does not plead very well" is not up to the standard of the rest of this essay.

No doubt Jocelyn Powell knows the difference between "veniality" and "veniality", so I assume that the passage, "On learning of his deputy's veniality, the Duke. . ." (p. 199), contains a misprint.

James Black

Ward Hellstrom, *On The Poems of Tennyson*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972. pp. 168. \$7.50.

Ward Hellstrom's short book focusses not on Tennyson's life or psyche but on the interpretation of individual poems and the way they relate to other poems. One key to these relationships is the thought of Liberal Anglicans which Hellstrom employs "as discursive analogues for what . . . Tennyson is saying poetically," not as sources for the poet's attitudes and beliefs. Thus patterns emerge in this book but not a thesis.

The first chapter deals with eight early poems which display the conviction that life must be fully lived, not pridefully evaded, and that death makes life meaningful. Hellstrom therefore concludes that the young Tennyson was not escapist or defeatist but affirmative in his answers to questions about art and life. The author is often perceptive in this chapter but not always persuasive. For instance, don't most readers feel strongly the seductive attractions of the half-life of the lotos-eaters? Surely in this poem Tennyson's heart fights against his head. And in "Ulysses" does not the rhythm often undercut the meaning of the hero's words, betraying a death-wish underlying Ulysses' affirmations of life?

Hellstrom's book makes its freshest contribution to Tennyson studies in the next five chapters where he sets the major long poems firmly in the context of Broad Church thought. Acknowledging his heavy indebtedness to Duncan Forbes's *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (1952), he shows the relevance of the theology and historiography of Julius Hare, F. D. Maurice, and A. P. Stanley to *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King*. But if their views are only "discursive analogues for what . . . Tennyson is saying poetically," and not in fact sources for his ideas and attitudes, Hellstrom's exposition merely fills in background which though interesting is not essential to the understanding of the poems. His disclaimer is too modest, however. The Liberal Anglican theological belief that through the natural we may rise to the spiritual, the means being love, that Christ's love ensures true progress in the unfolding of universal history, enables us to accept with more conviction the "one far-off divine event, / To which the whole creation moves."

Many readers, however, will find Hellstrom's remarks on specific aspects of Tennyson's poems more useful than his pages on Broad Church theory: his careful distinction between Tennyson and the persona of *In Memoriam*, as illustrated, for example, by his analysis of the "ark" and "dove" images in Section XII, his interpretation of the "Hesper-Phosphor" lyric (Section CXXI), his remarks on the role of Christ in the elegy and in *Maud*, his contrast between the Arthur of the *Idylls* and the Arthur of *In Memoriam*, and his explanation of our dissatisfaction with the *Idylls* — "Tennyson's attempt to preserve for woman her traditional role as complement rather than equal to man. . . ." As Hellstrom remarks, "A world which produced a Sue Bridehead could hardly be expected to accept, or perhaps even to understand, an Enid or an Elaine." Then, too, readers will value his many perceptive remarks on the nine later poems which he discusses in the last chapter. Some of these poems — "Sir John Oldcastle," "Columbus," "The Ancient Sage" — have seldom before been examined at any length, but Hellstrom convinces us that they are very much worth looking at. In several poems he discerns patterns and connections elicited earlier in his book, in "The Ancient Sage" what *In Memoriam* had told us — the natural world is our means to that wisdom which perceives the spirit, and in the same poem a message concerning our duty to live in the world which Tennyson had delivered years before in "The Palace of Art," "The Lotos-Eaters," and in "The Holy Grail."

In "Demeter and Persephone," Tennyson employs analogues to Christ as he had done in *In Memoriam*, while in "Lucretius" we see that the philosopher fails for the same reason as the king in the *Idylls* — the neglect of love. Here, too, in this final chapter we encounter the Liberal Anglican theologians, this time in connection with "translation" as the principle of progressive religion, a notion with which Hellstrom illuminates the neglected dramatic monologue, "Sir John Oldcastle," thus providing us with valuable information on Tennyson's use of "West" and "East" which had appeared in "The Hesperides" and other poems much earlier. In short, this is a book which is most significant for its reading of particular poems, but then that is all that Hellstrom claims for it.

Robert H. Tener

Brian Mathews, *The Receding Wave: Henry Lawson's Prose*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972. pp. 196. \$8.75.

In 1950, David Martin, the Australian-Hungarian novelist claimed that Australians are a city people with their "heart in the lonely bush." Undoubtedly, the claim proceeds from a premise which takes into account the writers who help to shape the Australian's image of the "bush" — Baynton, Furphy, Boake, even Davis. Such a list of writers would now continue until it encompassed Stow and White.

None of these writers, however, is in such need of critical examination as Henry Lawson. Furphy, White and Stow have been given the critical attention they deserve and criticism of their works will inevitably continue. Writers such as Baynton, Boake or Davis, because their works or their insights are slighter, may be temporarily relegated to the sidelines. Lawson's writing remains as a challenge to the Australian critic. As Brian Mathews points out in the Epilogue to his book:

. . . after his death in September 1922 the complexity of forces that was to establish him as the incarnation of the Australian myth began to work with a new intensity. . . . Lawson's pages became the battleground on which different degrees and varieties of nationalists, patriots and cultural neurotics fought out their acrimonious but essentially trivial encounters. In the process, Lawson's unobtrusive, fragile art was obscured and remained largely unnoticed for many years. (p. 178)

The Receding Wave will not resolve the questions surrounding Lawson's art; hopefully it will begin the process of substituting acumen for acrimony. The word begin is employed advisedly, for although Mathews uses Cecil Mann's edition (*The Stories of Henry Lawson*) and takes into account Dennis Douglas' objections to that text, even the textual problems of Lawson's short stories are far from resolved (incidentally, Dennis Douglas' "The Text of Lawson's Prose" appears in *Australian Literary Studies*, No. 2 (December 1966), not vol. 2 (1967) as Mathews cites under "Abbreviations and Texts").

Mathews' study must also be considered as a beginning to rational criticism of Henry Lawson for other reasons, for essentially the book contains three main threads.

The first of these, the psychological impact of the Australian bush, is brought forward in his examination of the Joe Wilson series, which Mathews regards as a "seminal quartet of stories." One cannot quibble with Mathews' critical assessment of their relation to Lawson's other stories. One could wish, however, that Mathews had pushed his analysis slightly further. He praises "Water Them Geraniums" saying that it shows:

. . . Lawson's delicate understanding of man's desperate need to know himself involved in humanity . . . and his fear and horror when . . . he begins to lose himself and his human landmarks in the labyrinths of alienation and endless physical stress; and it is clear that Lawson sees this as a likely fate in the environment of the Australian bush. (pp. 27-28)

Yet we find in the same story, that Joe Wilson is literally condemned to a life in the bush because the combination of Sydney and alcohol inevitably defeats him; the story contains a dimension of Joe Wilson's bush existence which Mathews ignores.

The second thread which moves through Mathews' criticism is his awareness of the fact that Lawson wrote at a particular time in Australian cultural history. Thus, Mathews feels that the young Lawson, at least, suffered from what he terms "the colonial tension" — the bifurcation of sensibility which occurs when the writer recognizes the inferiority of colonial cultures, yet feels a youthful and vigorous optimism about his own (and his country's) potentialities. "Colonial tension" may only be a variation on A. A. Phillips' concept of the "cultural cringe" and yet one is left with the feeling that Mathews may well have created a theory which should be applied not just to the tensions in Lawson's life, but also to the basic tensions which appear within his work.

The other major thread in *The Receding Wave* is the biographical one. In a chapter in which he aptly dubs Louisa Lawson "the chieftainess," Mathews argues for her role in Henry's life as a disturbing influence, adding to Henry's admission that his mother's ambition launched him on a literary career the darker notion that she may also have added to the tensions that finally destroyed him. However, until we have definitive biographies of both Louisa and Henry, Mathews' comments will remain as interesting speculations.

The Receding Wave must be valued however for the insight which Mathews brings to bear on Lawson's stories themselves, for his criticism is informed and temperate. His assessments of the prose do not seek to elevate; rather they elucidate. The book may invite response for its biographical or sociological concerns, but it must be ceded its importance as the first step toward a just assessment of Henry Lawson.

Grant McGregor

Books Received

Would publishers please note the change of address of ARIEL.

- ANOZIE, SUNDAY O., *Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric*. London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1972. pp. 203. £1.00.
- BROOKS, CLEANTH, *A Shaping Joy: Studies in the Writer's Craft*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973. pp. 393. (paper) £2.0.
- CONSTANT, BENJAMIN, *De La Justice Politique*, ed. Burton R. Pollin. Quebec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1972. pp. 394. \$12.00.
- DONNO, ELIZABETH STORY, ed., *Andrew Marvell: The Complete Poems*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd. 1972. pp. 314. (paper) \$3.25.
- HAIR, DONALD S., *Browning's Experiments with Genre*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1972. pp. 204. \$10.00.
- MELVILLE, HERMAN, *Moby-Dick*, ed. Harold Beaver. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd. 1972. pp. 1011. (paper) \$4.25.
- MIKHAIL, E. H., *A Bibliography of Modern Irish Drama 1899-1970*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1972. pp. 51. \$6.50.
- MORLEY, PATRICIA A., *The Immoral Moralists*. Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972. pp. 144. (paper) \$2.75.
- NERUDA, PABLO, *The Heights of Macchu Picchu*, trans. Nathaniel Tarn. London: Jonathan Cape, 1972. pp. 47. (paper) \$2.00.
- Open University Courses. Texts prepared by:
- HAVELY, CICELY, *Wordsworth*. Bletchley: The Open University Press, 1972. pp. 69. (paper) £1.10.
- HAVELY, CICELY, *Elizabethan Poetry*. Bletchley: The Open University Press, 1972. pp. 101. (paper) £1.40.
- HAVELY, CICELY, *King Lear*. Bletchley: The Open University Press, 1972. pp. 75. (paper) £1.20.
- KETTLE, ARNOLD, *Stendhal's Scarlet & Black*. Bletchley: The Open University Press, 1972. pp. 27. (paper) £0.80.
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- MARTIN, GRAHAM, *D. H. Lawrence's The Rainbow*. Bletchley: The Open University Press, 1972. pp. 108. (paper) £1.30.

- MARTIN, GRAHAM and FERGUSON, JOHN, *Rousseau: Goethe and Faust*. Bletchley: The Open University Press, 1972. pp. 93. £1.20.
- STONE, BRIAN and HAVELY, CICELY, *English Renaissance Drama*. Bletchley: The Open University Press, 1972. pp. 76. £1.40.
- PALMER, D. J. ed., *Tennyson, Writers and their Background Series*. London: G. Bell, 1973. pp. 279. £4.50.
- PRITCHARD, WILLIAM H. ed., *W. B. Yeats: A Critical Anthology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd. 1972. pp. 390. (paper) \$4.25.
- REES, JOAN, ed., *Selected Writings of Fulke Greville*. London: The Athlone Press, 1973. pp. 182. (cloth) £2.90; (paper) £1.25.
- SALGADO, GAMINI, ed., *Cony-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets: An Anthology of Elizabethan Low Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd. 1972. pp. 391. (paper) \$1.65.
- SUTHERLAND, FRASER, *The Style of Innocence: A Study of Hemingway and Callaghan*. Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972. pp. 120. \$4.50.
- VREESWIJK, HARRY, *Notes on Joyce's Ulysses Part 1 (Chapter 1 - 3)*. Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1971. pp. 223. (paper) n.p.
- WADE MICHAEL, *Peter Abrahams*. London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1972. pp. 219. £1.10.
- WOODHOUSE, A. S. P., *The Heavenly Muse: A Preface to Milton*, ed. Hugh MacCallum. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1972. pp. 373. \$20.00.