Book Reviews

David L. Jeffrey *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; Toronto: Burns & MacEachern, 1975. pp. xvi + 306. \$12.50.

Until very recently, critics seemed ashamed of even broaching the subject of possible religious and liturgical antecedents to any but the most obviously related forms of literature. Now the fashion seems to have gone almost to the other extreme. The present book under review is a very acceptable addition to this corpus of criticism, especially since it relates to an area not over-endowed with useful texts or commentaries, for when one has cited Greene, Robbins, Carleton Brown, and Rosemary Woolf, one has virtually exhausted the most useful list of works on the Mediaeval Lyric. More especially, Dr. Jeffrey, having caught the reader's eye with an unobvious topic, adequately demonstrates that his approach is a vital key to ascertaining the sources, background and purpose of a surprisingly large number of pre-1350 lyrics. The influence of the Franciscans on the arts has, of course, long been recognized. In the field of painting, Van Marle has pointed out how they helped to convey a fuller awareness of the beauty of man and nature, especially to be noted in the works of Giotto, and Robbins has claimed that a large proportion of Mediaeval English lyrics were the works of Franciscans. But Dr. Jeffrey has taken the case much further.

He begins by outlining the growth of the lyric for homiletic and evangelical purposes, showing how the Franciscans differed from the religious jongleurs of France, in particular those of the Waldensian sect. He then provides a stimulating chapter on the Franciscan ideas of aesthetics, with a valuable section on St. Bonaventure, and crowns it with what in many ways is the best chapter in the book: a discussion of the earliest Franciscan lyrics in Italy with a careful treatment of the Cortona poems, including the lovely "Nollo pensai giamai."

Two-thirds of the way through the book the scene moves to England, with a consideration of the range of material and methodology of the Franciscan preachers and the style of their verse. A good selection of poetry is provided and many important points are made and often proved: that Franciscan lyrics are far more numerous than has hitherto been claimed, and that several of the manuscripts usually ascribed to Dominicans are more obviously of Franciscan origin, notably MS Digby 86, for which the evidence is particularly eloquent. It is also shown that verse was more frequently interpolated in sermons than even Knowles and Owst supposed, and was quite often sung; and that, in general (pace Woolf) a large number of the lyrics must have had musical settings.

Of particular literary significance is the statement that the Franciscans were responsible for a new attitude to nature in popular Middle English poetry, where it was now valued 'almost for its own sake', though the first example used to prove this point is rather inept, since Summer is icumen in is surely dependent on a much earlier tradition and its date is also still in doubt.

The whole book is very readable, being stimulating, generally lucid and having ample, though uneven, translations to assist the lay reader. There are, however, some blemishes. Barely 80 of the 276 pages of text deal with the lyric in England, and while liberal quotations are provided, the commentary and analysis are rather threadbare until the last few pages. The index is insufficiently comprehensive, while the list of manuscripts cited is provided only on an errata slip and is an inconsistent mess. The chapters are a little disorganised and a trifle bitty, and there is a noticeable amount of overlap and repetition. In terms of content, the case, while plausible, is not always sufficiently demonstrated, and is sometimes overstated. The role of the Dominicans, Augustinians and the Benedictines is almost cavalierly dismissed and pre-Franciscan tradition is unnecessarily overlooked. For example, the felix culpa notion and the Christ-knight image are not exclusively Franciscan preserves, and the author seems to have forgotten that a number of Anglo-Saxon poems expressed much of what he considers to be an innovation for the 13th century, for example, the Dream of the Rood. The author has also to admit modestly if not shamefacedly that he had no time to deal with such important writers as Robert of Brunne, Richard Rolle, Dunbar and the highly influential John Pecham.

Nevertheless, the book is essential to the study of the Mediaeval English lyric (assuming we will one day be told what precisely a Mediaeval lyric *is*) and it is stimulating not only in the area it covers but in the possibilities it opens up for consideration in later centuries and other countries.

Anthony G. Petti

J. A. Sutherland, Victorian Novelists and Publishers. London: Athlone Press; Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 252. f7 and \$13.95.

During the past twenty years or so, we have become increasingly aware that publishers' requirements and conventions influenced the structure of the Victorian novel. Length, looseness, repetition, and the management of climaxes, for example, might be due to the demands of prolonged serialisation. The communication between author and reader that serialisation stimulated might lead to modification of content. We also know that circulating libraries, especially Mudie's, and booksellers, such as W. H. Smith, could exert pressure. We have long known, from biographies and anecdotes, of some of the dealings between novelists and their publishers: Dickens' quarrels and complex negotiations, Trollope's demands for what he considered a fair price, Lewes' approaching Blackwood on George Eliot's behalf, the rejection of *The Professor* and *The Poor Man and the Lady*.

Now Dr. Sutherland has written a detailed study of the relationship between Victorian novelists and publishers. It is concerned mainly with seven leading publishers - Bentley, Blackwood, Smith Elder and Co., Macmillan, Chapman and Hall, Bradbury and Evans, and Longman — and is wideranging, in that minor novelists such as Lever and Mrs. Henry Wood are considered as well as all the major novelists of the time. The first part gives a general picture of publishing conditions. This was the period of the predominance of the three-volume novel, which Dr. Sutherland thinks remained so "rock-like" and "immutable" simply because it was commercially safe (which he convincingly demonstrates). He also discusses four supplementary means of publication and distribution: part-issues, circulating libraries, collective reissues, and serialisation. During the eighteen-forties, mechanical modes of production superseded manual methods, and at the same time relationships between authors and publishers were formalised, as he shows by comparing contracts Bulwer Lytton made in 1833 and 1847. He suggests that the attention paid to structural matters in the novel in the eighteen-forties and eighteen-fifties by Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and Meredith may be related to this formalisation. This is a point worth considering, although obviously we cannot say that there is a simple cause-and-effect connection here. Sutherland discusses the conflict that sometimes existed between conservatism and innovation in the fiction publishing business. It is interesting to speculate, rather as Richard Altick did (in a passage quoted by Sutherland), on what changes in form and content would have occurred if novelists had not been affected by what Sutherland terms "institutional conservations". atism," which was principally represented by the three-volume novel. The second part consists of seven separate case-studies of different kinds. The most striking are those concerning Henry Esmond, Westward Ho!, and Dickens. In Thackeray at Work, Dr. Sutherland argued that Henry Esmond owed much to Thackeray's improvisation, but here he shows how George Smith influenced the work; by insisting in the contract on "a continuous narrative" and stipulating that a second down payment would be made only on delivery of the complete book, he imposed a unity foreign to Thackeray's former practice. Macmillan's and Kingsley are also shown as partners in the making of Westward Ho! The publishers. like Kingsley, saw it as their mission to produce an uplifting novel, which on completion they marketed with energy and acumen. The chapter on Dickens reveals his close engagement with all the particulars of running All the Year Round, and can be regarded as complementing the investigation Harry Stone has already made of Dickens' similar work on Household Words.

Dr. Sutherland has based his book on much original research, using publishers' records and correspondence, and therefore elucidating and supporting his discussion with fresh and vivid detail: an angry, sarcastic retort from Reade to Bentley, who was exploiting him ("Since then an honourable understanding is nothing to you . . . suck the orange dry by all means"); Bulwer Lytton's "lordly summons" to either Chapman or Hall to attend upon him at home; Macmillan's recommending Westward Ho! to Mudie as "a very spirit stirring one . . . just fit for these War Times."

Other details, not so entertaining but more specific and illuminating, come from account books, which Dr. Sutherland adroitly interprets in order to reinforce his argument. The originality and attractiveness of the book must not lead us to underestimate the power of the great authors, the critics, and the reading public (which, in fact, Dr. Sutherland makes clear enough). It is impossible to dictate terms to Dickens or George Eliot; the latter seemed to Blackwood, in words quoted in this book, to be "so great a giant that there [was] nothing for it but to accept her inspirations and leave criticism alone." The influence of Forster, Morley, and Lewes, to name only three, was considerable. Nor can we safely generalise about the effect the publishers had; it could be negative or positive, clear or uncertain, strong or non-existent. But although publishers were only one factor amongst the many that contributed to the novelists' success or failure, we needed to know about them, and Dr. Sutherland's richly informative book enables us fully to appreciate the significance they had in the shaping of the Victorian novel.

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Donald Hawes

Richard Ruland, America in Modern European Literature: From Image to Metaphor. New York: New York University Press, 1976. pp. xv + 197. \$12.50.

When the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci commented, in a 1969 interview, that "We Europeans used to love you Americans . . . now many of us don't love you anymore; indeed, some hate you," Norman Mailer replied: "You used to love us because love is hope, and we Americans were your hope" (Oriana Fallaci, The Egoists, Tempo Books, New York, 1969, p. 5).

The opening chapters of Professor Ruland's work trace the origins and progress of this hope from its roots in the ideal worlds of the Eden and Atlantis myths, through the early explorers' dreams of a new continent of almost limitless wealth, the 18th and early 19th Century visions of America as home of the "noble savage" uncorrupted by civilization as well as the potential site of a "model" commonwealth, and, finally, the later immigrants' picture of the United States as a receptive haven of freedom and economic opportunity for Europe's victims.

This is the best part of the book. A large subject area is dealt with concisely and accurately, the relevant sources are quoted or summarized, and, with so much ground to cover, a certain lack of depth is not unacceptable.

The author's main concern, however, is the reaction of modern Continental writers to the reality that the myth, inevitably, became. For, as Dr. Ruland stresses, from the very first, for Europeans, America was a myth, composed largely of two complementary elements: "the certainty that a promise had been made," and the unachievable, unrealistic ideals and expectations involved in this promise.

As a result, the reaction of most of these authors has been disappointment, bitterness, and rejection. America has become the

victim of an image for which she never was responsible in the first place, while at the same time reaffirming her "claim upon [the writer's] imagination by the intensity with which he condemns those who have had the keeping of the dream but have failed in their charge."

Perhaps inevitably, it is the Marxist-oriented authors in particular who see America in the most negative light; figures such as Brecht and Gorky portraying her society as the quintessence of Capitalist villainy (a result of the lust for wealth that motivated so many immigrants), and the epitome of violence and disillusionment.

More surprisingly, it is these same authors who castigate most fiercely that aspect of America—its mechanization of human life—which has horrified continental writers as diverse as Céline, with his vision of New York as "an expressionist nightmare", and Rilke, who, as early as 1913 could write, "I no longer love Paris because it is disfiguring and Americanizing itself."

Finally, however, the culminating realization emerges that, as Dr. Lal in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* says, "Of course the whole world is now the United States. Inescapable. . . ." America is no longer either a mythology or unique; it has simply entered the 20th century first, and become a metaphor for the problems with which the European writer must come to grips in his *own* environment.

In the last half of his book, Professor Ruland considers the images of America in the works of six individual Continental authors. Here, however, what has been acceptable, if not a virtue, in his method becomes a deficiency: he simply attempts to cover too much ground in too little space. The longest essay, appropriately, is on Brecht, with his somewhat repetitious picture of America as representative of everything that is going wrong in Europe: a society "that journeys nowhere/With incomparable speed." The most interesting piece considers Kafka's unfinished Amerika, with its most unKafkaesque vision of the ultimate evolution of the New World society as benign rather than malignant—even its immense bureaucracy "bathed in a religious glow."

But even these essays tend toward the obvious, while the others — on Mayakovsky, Soldati, Green, and Perse (this last thin to the point of irrelevance) — present hardly more than a superficial view. As in the earlier sections of the book, it is hard to quarrel with what the author says, but equally hard to become involved in it; Professor Ruland tends to play it very safe indeed, restating what to the specialist is obvious, and never taking chances with the controversial.

In addition, the work as a whole suffers from a certain compartmentalization, suggesting its possible origin as a series of lectures for a not-too-sophisticated audience. The result is a work perhaps too specialized for the ordinary reader, yet one which lacks the depth and occasional enlightening originality sought by the scholar.

Patrick Rafroidi and Maurice Harmon, eds., *The Irish Novel in Our Time*. Lille: Publications de L'Universite de Lille, 1975, pp. 424. F65.

This collection of essays will enhance the growing reputation of Lille as a centre for Irish studies. CERIUL (University of Lille Centre for Irish Studies) publications include: P. Rafroidi's L'Irlande et le Romantisme; C. Fierobe's Charles Robert Maturin; J. Genet's W. B. Yeats; a reprint of John Banim's The Boyne Water; French translations of Brian Moore's Catholics and James Plunkett's The Trusting and the Maimed; and two other collective studies, Aspects of the Irish Theatre and France-Ireland, Literary Relations.

The twenty essays in the collection are subsumed under three headings: "Traditions and Conventions", "Forces and Themes in Modern Irish Fiction", "Twelve Novelists, 1950-1975"; and they are followed by selective bibliographies for seventy-one Irish novelists of the twentieth century.

Among the seven background subjects explored in the first two sections, the most interesting, perhaps, are two which are not widely understood: modern fiction in Irish and the response of the novelist to the current "Troubles" in Ulster. A number of well-known Irish writers, among them Liam O'Flaherty and Brendan Behan, have reputations in Irish as well as English. Seán O'Tuama explores "The Other Tradition" in an essay on modern fiction in Irish. Literature in Irish has existed for some two thousand years, but the poetic tradition was so dominant that the first novel in Irish, Séadna by Peadar O Laoghaire, was not published until 1904. Writers of fiction in Irish share with their countrymen who write fiction in English a penchant for the short story rather than the novel. The bulk of novels written in Irish have been autobiographical, in the manner of Joyce's Portrait of the Artist. O'Tuama accounts for these features of the literary tradition in Irish; and, in his assessment of achievements in the novel, he hails Máirtin O Cadhain's Cré na Cille (The Graveyard Earth), written in 1949, as the most important. Few readers of Irish will disagree with this assessment, or with his assertion that "O Cadhain wrote the most consciously-patterned and richest-textured prose that any Irishman has written in this century, except Beckett and Joyce" (p. 43), extravagant as it might appear to be. O'Tuama does not explore the tension between writers in Irish and writers in English. Joyce was acutely aware of the lack of a novel-writing tradition and of a play-writing tradition in Irish. This awareness is evident in his attack on the Irish Literary Theatre and his justification of his interest in European writers, notably Ibsen, in The Day of the Rabblement (1901): "A nation which never advanced so far as a miracle-play affords no literary model to the artist, and he must look abroad."

Richard Deutsch explores the limited response of Irish novelists to the current conflict in his essay, "Within Two Shadows': The Troubles in Northern Ireland." Unlike Irish poets, Irish novelists have not responded to the conflict by rushing into print. In Butcher's Dozen the poet Thomas Kinsella responded to Derry's "Bloody Sunday," January 30, 1972 as quickly as Yeats did to the

events of Easter 1916. In his explanation of the lack of response to the conflict on the part of the more established Irish novelists, such as Brian Moore, Deutsch quotes the Ulster-born novelist Maurice Leitch: "If [writers] are to be honest to themselves and to their work, [the situation] must be folded away into the brain for some sort of ripening process to take place" (p. 151). Moore has since responded, though somewhat obliquely, in The Doctor's Wife. That novel is not set in Ireland, but vivid scenes of death and destruction in Belfast are etched indelibly on the mind of Mrs. Redden; and, even though she states that one "can't blame the Troubles for everything," her chilling decision at the end of the novel is to a large extent a result of the conflict. Moore confirmed this in a recent Canadian Broadcasting Corporation interview. He stated that Northern Ireland is a paradigm of the modern world, which is disintegrating for reasons suggested by Mrs. Redden: "The Protestants don't believe in Britain and the Catholics don't believe in God. And none of us believes in the future."

The twelve contemporary novelists discussed in the third section are: Francis Stuart, who merits two essays, Flann O'Brien, Benedict Kiely, James Plunkett, Brian Moore, John Broderick, Richard Power, Edna O'Brien, Christy Brown, Thomas Kilroy, John McGahern and John Banville. With a few exceptions, such as the repeated failure to distinguish between James Joyce and Stephen Dedalus in one essay, and the fact that another is little more than a collection of one hundred and forty-nine quotations strung along a rather thin narrative thread, the essays are sound and informative. Françoise Borel's essay on Christy Brown is representative. It compares Brown's impressive Down all the Days with his disappointing second novel, A Shadow on Summer, and pinpoints those flaws, the "adjectival itch" (p. 291), the "repetitive garrulity" (p. 292) and the "pathetic quadrangular plot" (p. 293), which make the second novel virtually unreadable.

It is unfortunate that such an important collection of essays should appear to have been proofread and printed in a cavalier manner; the book is riddled with errors throughout. For the most part they are no more than minor irritations, but they are serious when the reader is forced to wonder how extensive the lacuna is in the text of Kathleen O'Flaherty's essay at the bottom of page seventy-one, and when Flann O'Brien and John McGahern appear as "Flann McGahern" (p. 100).

Richard Wall

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