

well documented and which certainly influenced the kind of poetry he wrote. It is salutary not to emphasize this aspect to the exclusion of all else (a tendency which is manifest in Mario Praz's enormously influential study of romantic decadence, *The Romantic Agony*, which was first published in 1933). Still, by ignoring completely Swinburne's obsession with flagellation, Murfin is tilting the balance too far in the other direction.

In the years between the publication of *Poems and Ballads* (1866) and *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) Murfin sees a fundamental change in Swinburne's outlook. The despair, the disintegration, the sense that "nothing is all" (p. 172), which characterize *Poems and Ballads*, are replaced by an affirmation in the worth of life. Nihilism gives way to a call to work for a society based upon loving-kindness. Swinburne also insists in these later poems that to obtain a modicum of happiness necessitates taking a full look at the worst life has to offer. Murfin suggests that this new outlook is most fully developed in Swinburne's 1876 drama, *Erechtheus*. Unfortunately it is at this point that Murfin ends his study of Swinburne's poetic evolution, an evolution which had come to rest upon the conviction that what was to be striven for was "a humanized *ethos*, a society that, though neither perfect nor millennial, is established in liberty, wisdom and justice" (p. 71). He takes no account of Swinburne's later poems when he was at *The Pines*—poems which include many particularly horrid examples of truculent chauvinism in which Swinburne attacks the Irish and the Boers both of whom had the temerity to struggle against the crushing weight of British imperialism.

Murfin begins his discussion of Hardy by pointing out that Hardy repeatedly denied "transcendental possibilities" (p. 83). This is scarcely a startling discovery; what is surprising is Murfin's wholly plausible argument that this denial stems from Hardy's admiration for Swinburne's poetry and what it said. This thesis is admirably developed through sensitive and often very perceptive readings of Hardy's poems and novels. It is also to Murfin's credit that in his evaluation of Hardy he does recognize "certain biographical catalysts" (p. 91) which shaped Hardy's outlook. This, as has already been mentioned, is what he failed to do in his analysis of Swinburne.

The book concludes with a consideration of Lawrence, and Murfin's chief contribution here is to show not only the extent of Lawrence's indebtedness to Hardy (which has long been recognized, although perhaps not adequately developed), but also to Swinburne (which has not before received any attention). His analyses of Lawrence's poems, particularly those which appeared between 1901 and 1914, go far to strengthen his argument. Considerable space is also devoted to an interpretation of *The White Peacock*, a novel many critics have been tempted to dismiss as a mere apprenticeship piece. But Murfin shows that for all its flaws as a novel, it is an absolutely essential work if one is to understand the basis of Lawrence's thought. *The White Peacock*, he insists, turns inside out that counsel of despair which seems to emerge in Hardy's novels—that only the meek, practical character, who does not rebel against his environment, can survive the hostile forces of society and of the universe. In *The Rainbow* he comes to the conclusion that Lawrence is wrestling, just as Swinburne did, for a humanistic faith in a "post-lapsarian" world. But Lawrence's really important novels, where his philosophical views are developed and refined in all their complexities (and obfuscations), such as *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, are merely mentioned in passing.

Nevertheless, whatever caveats one may have about this book, there is no doubt that it is a valuable contribution to our understanding of certain intellectual and emotional dilemmas which form an undercurrent in so much of Victorian and modern literature.

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GEOFFREY AGGELER

Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist

University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1979. pp. 245. \$15.75 (U.S.)

Beginning with a well-crafted biography of John Anthony Burgess Wilson, Geoffrey Aggeler's study traces the development of Burgess's art and themes, from *A Vision of Battlements* (written 1949; published 1965)

to *Napoleon Symphony* (1974), with notices of forthcoming works, including an Italian translation of *Finnegans Wake* and a novel, *The Affairs of Men*, focusing on a character resembling Pope John XXIII. "Enter Posterity" shows Aggeler clearly in his element, as he begins with a respectful parody of the opening scene of *Enderby* and proceeds to shape out the artist's life from taped interviews and correspondence with him.

Burgess, as Aggeler justly (and frequently) insists, is a "serious" writer. A respect for the strict demands of the craft of the novel, a dedication to hard work, and an abiding concern with the fundamental values of life and art—these are repeatedly mirrored in Aggeler's account of the man and his creations. Fecundity, unlike its contrary, is no diriment impediment to high quality.

While Aggeler, like Burgess, is a generous man—he is quick to use "magnificent," "brilliant," and "masterpiece"—he acknowledges that some of Burgess's works are more brilliant than others. The fact of unevenness—the inevitable gradations are not always sharp—is mirrored in the quality of the analysis. While the reader of Burgess will find something to instruct and delight in all the parts of Aggeler's book, he may notice that some pages offer considerably more than others. The commentary on *The Wanting Seed* and *A Clockwork Orange*, outlining the scheme of opposition governing Burgess's treatment of the perennial Pelagius-Augustine debate, for example, seems mechanical in design. But this is as it should be: *agere sequitur esse*. The moments in these two novels, to paraphrase Conrad, seem to exist for the illustration of the idea. In the sections on *Nothing Like the Sun* and *Napoleon Symphony*, Aggeler has much better texts to work from, and his writing takes inspiration from the master-composer. The commentator follows Burgess's score closely: "As a musician, Burgess is troped to the auditory" (pp. 10, 69). The author of *ReJoyce* has been well sung, and the reader will need both hands vigorously to applaud the performance.

If this study errs at all, it errs from generosity. Aggeler, a titular professor of English at the University of Utah, would have us understand that he is no "egg-head"; and he reminds us that Burgess speaks eloquently and convincingly to many outside the academic community. The scholar who refers but once and discreetly (p. 234) to A. A. De Vitis's

Anthony Burgess (New York: Twayne, 1972), to cite but one example, takes satisfaction in noting that "a Canadian Air Force noncom with little formal education but plenty of exotic travel under his belt . . . admired" the *Malayan Trilogy* (p. 52). With this there can be no argument. But some of the readers comfortably employed outside the halls of higher learning who pick up *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist* may query, for example, the professor's certainty in pronouncing "very funny" (p. 35) the following passage from *A Vision of Battlements*: "The storm died down, and there was already in the clearer air the smell of a warmer climate. The rolling English drunkard had come to the Mediterranean by way of the Viking whale roads. The ship woke to life again, the decks were busy with arms drill, P.T., a succulent drawled lecture on venereal disease. Wrens, dapper in flapping bellbotoms, provocative with Sloane Square vowels and wagging haunches, minced up and down. . . . Only a few bodies still lay prone and supine, rejecting the hard-boiled breakfast eggs and the lyrical call of life. As to some faunfife or Triton-horn, the colleagues of Sergeant Ennis rose from their beds, back to perpetual games of solo, and their harsh vowels cut the mellow cultured flutings of the Intelligence Corps contingent. Though the vowels of Sergeant Agate, ballet-dancer, one-time Petrouchka praised by Stravinsky and patted by Diaghilev, were far from harsh" (pp. 15-16). Many non-coms and officers in the Canadian Armed Forces will fail to see the humor, I think. But this is perhaps to fret over the improbable.

The fact that there is so little in this book that the close reader of Burgess can take exception to suggests just how fine a job Aggeler has done. His considerable and careful scholarship, expressed as it is in a style at once elegant and entertaining, provides a rare experience for the reader of contemporary literary criticism. *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist* sets a high standard for the studies that will follow.

Camille R. La Bossière