

View of Our Literary Evaluators

Modern American Criticism, by Walter Sutton (Prentice-Hall, 298 pp. \$5.95), advances the need for an intelligent eclecticism in critical method. Emile Capouya is a freelance writer.

By EMILE CAPOUYA

IS IT an optical illusion only? The closer Walter Sutton comes to our own 1963 in his excellent survey of modern American literary criticism, the more flexible, balanced, judicious, and generally club-able the critics seem to be. It would be enough to renew one's faith in the idea of progress, except that they don't seem to be saying all that much. From another point of view, then, the progress since 1900 is a devolution. The cranks, hardnoses, radicals, and royalists have tended to give way to more resigned types, most of whose passion goes into system-building. Spingarn, Huneker, and Babbitt seem, in contrast, giants in the earth.

Not that the giants were necessarily apostles of light. Irving Babbitt himself, and that lesser Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, were tight-lipped evangelists of a "New Humanism" that was partly the old inhumanism and partly a home-grown Yankee longing to bend the knee to mace and mitre. For the American spirit, broad and general as the casing air, has that element too—the one that in our time animates the luminaries of the *National Review*. I mean, of course, the enthusiasm for a jumped-up, aristocratical three-in-one of Birth, Wealth, and Brains, the only trinity of any consequence ever to admit nasty old money as one of its terms.

Mr. Sutton quotes Santayana's *The Genteel Tradition at Bay*, dissenting from Babbitt and More: "Call it humanism or not, only a morality frankly relative to man's nature is worthy of man, being at once vital and rational, martial and generous; whereas absolutism smells of fustiness as well as of faggots." And the New Conservatives, even more than the New Humanists, remind one of the character in Conrad, an American, who announces himself as "*Catholique, royaliste, et gentil-homme*," the point being that if you have to announce it, it isn't so. The classic demonstration of that fact is the

essay that did for the New Humanism what *Don Quixote* did for books of chivalry—Edmund Wilson's "Paul Elmer More and the Mithraic Bull." Mr. Sutton does not mention the essay, but he has absorbed its spirit, as his fair but faintly ironic account of the New Humanists shows. This book goes on to treat the psychological and "myth" critics (dreadful phrase) who draw their basic insights from Freud and Jung; the radical critics of the Twenties and Thirties (hardly a man is now alive who remembers that Marxist dogmatism was connected with Marxist generosity and desire for social decency, but Mr. Sutton reminds us); the New Critics (Fugitives and others) and the New Aristotelians, who build on such divine simplicities as "Poetry is more serious and more philosophical than history" and "A work of literature must have a beginning, a middle, and an end"—and very good principles they are. These sections are followed by an unsystematic, necessary chapter that deals with such important maverick works as Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature*, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, and Stanley Edgar Hyman's *The Armed Vision*. Finally, Mr. Sutton

advances the need for an intelligent eclecticism in critical method, achieved not by a synthesis of all methods in the person of a supercritic, but by a conversation among critics who pursue their special insights while speaking a common technical language.

Mr. Sutton has written a good-tempered and intelligent survey of the literary criticism of our period, one that suggests how the invidious competition of critical schools can be overcome and their separate efforts made to contribute to the common enterprise of talking sense about literature. But one has that "Yarrow Visited" sensation. How much more bracing are the principles sketched by the young critic Eleanor Hakim: Art is inherently radical, because its vision of beautiful order swears at the false order of political and social institutions. Society protects itself in a hundred ways against the radical criticism of art: the middleman (publisher, producer, gallery-owner) establishes a false context for its transmission; the audience is hardened against its message; and, finally, the artist's ability to produce significant art is sapped by the life we all lead and that he shares with us. The critic's business, then, is to separate the radical truth from the yea-saying falsehood and encourage the audience to open its eyes and the artist to be brave, employing the technical equipment that seems best suited to the specific situation. And the time for that is now, while we still dimly remember what art is supposed to be about.

The Anatomy of a Nightingale

Literature and Science, by Aldous Huxley (Harper & Row, 118 pp. \$3.50), attempts to mediate the controversy over the "two cultures." Sir Herbert Read's latest books are "*To Hell with Culture*" and "*The Contrary Experience*."

By HERBERT READ

THE SNOW-LEAVIS controversy about the "two cultures" has left most people bewildered. It raised so much passion that the main issue was obscured, and the partisans of art and the partisans of science retired to their respective camps. Now comes Aldous Huxley with an offer of conciliation. No one is better fitted to see both sides of the question; a member of a family

that has contributed so much to our scientific enlightenment, he himself is an artist—a writer with a poetic vision, a sense of reality, and a style distinguished for its grace and clarity.

He begins by asking what is the function of literature, what its psychology, and what the nature of literary language? How do its function, psychology, and language differ from those of science? He answers these fundamental questions very precisely, and then goes on to suggest that whatever the relationship between literature and science in the past or the present, it might well be different in the future.

Let us first note that Mr. Huxley unduly simplifies the problem by restricting one side of the controversy, art, to one kind of art—literature. He

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SR's Check List of Current Books

Art, Architecture

MARCA-RELLI. By H. H. Amason. Abrams. \$25.

THE ROOTS OF JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE. Photographs by Yugio Futagawa. Text by Teiji Itoh. Harper & Row. \$25.

Current Affairs

AFRICAN AFFAIRS, No.2. Edited by Kenneth Kirkwood. Southern Illinois Univ. Press. \$4.25.

CHANGE, HOPE AND THE BOMB. By David E. Lilienthal. Princeton Univ. Press. \$3.50.

FIRST AMENDMENT FREEDOMS: Selected Cases on Freedom of Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly. By Milton R. Konvitz. Cornell Univ. Press. \$9.75.

THE GERMAN PHOENIX. By William Henry Chamberlin. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$5.95.

MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS, No. 3. Edited by Albert Hourani. Southern Illinois Univ. Press. \$4.25.

Education

THE AGE OF THE SCHOLAR: Observations on Education in a Troubled Decade. By Nathan M. Pusey. Harvard Univ. Press. \$4.50.

RELIGION AND THE SCHOOLS: The Great Controversy. By Paul Blanshard. Beacon. \$4.95.

CHAOS IN OUR COLLEGES. By Morris Freedman. McKay. \$4.50.

THE REVOLT OF THE COLLEGE INTELLECTUAL. By Everett Lee Hunt. Human Relations Aids. \$5.

Essays

THE ENAMELED WISHBONE and Other Touchstones. By Robert Henderson. Macmillan. \$4.95.

VERDICTS OUT OF COURT. By Clarence Darrow. Edited by Arthur and Lila Weinberg. Quadrangle. \$6.95.

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THE AGING BOY. By Julian Claman. Doubleday. \$4.95.

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD. By John Scholl. Simon & Schuster. \$5.95.

CONFUSIONS. By Jack Ludwig. New York Graphic Society. \$4.95.

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ICE STATION ZEBRA. By Alistair MacLean. Doubleday. \$3.95.

I, KETURAH. By Ruth Wolff. John Day. \$4.95.

LOVE IN A LONDON FLAT. By Victor Jones. Lyle Stuart. \$3.50.

OTHER WINTERS, OTHER SPRINGS. By Flora Sandstrom. World. \$4.95.

OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS. By Jean Genet. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. Grove. \$6.50.

THREAD OF VICTORY. By Helen Lobdell. McKay. \$3.25.

THE TOYFAIR. By Neal Faasen. Simon & Schuster. \$3.95.

THE YOUNG DIVORCEES. By Lissa Charell. Macmillan. \$5.95.

History

AMERICANS AND CHINESE: A Historical Essay and a Bibliography. By Kwang-ching Liu. Harvard Univ. Press. \$3.50.

CHINA AND CHRISTIANITY: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870. By Paul A. Cohen. Harvard Univ. Press. \$7.

THE DEFENSE OF BERLIN. By Jean Edward Smith. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. \$6.95.

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF HABSURG. By Edward Crankshaw. Viking. \$7.50.

THE FIRST TURKISH REPUBLIC: A Case Study in National Development. By Richard D. Robinson. Harvard Univ. Press. \$5.95.

FROM METTERNICH TO HITLER: Aspects of British and Foreign History, 1814-1939. Edited by W. N. Medlicott. Barnes & Noble. \$5.

FROM WILSON TO ROOSEVELT: Foreign Policy of the United States, 1913-1945. By Jean-Baptiste Duroselle. Translated by Nancy Lyman Roelker. Harvard Univ. Press. \$10.

Literary Criticism

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GOD: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers. By J. Hillis Miller. Harvard Univ. Press. \$7.50.

SELECTED PREFACES AND INTRODUCTIONS OF W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. Doubleday. \$4.50.

SHAKESPEARE AND CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. By Roland Frye. Princeton University Press. \$6.

SPAIN AND THE WESTERN TRADITION: The Castilian Mind in Literature from *El Cid* to Calderón. By Otis H. Green. Univ. of Wisconsin Press. \$7.50.

Miscellany

THE ART OF CARVING. By House & Garden. Simon & Schuster. \$3.95.

CHINESE COOKING MADE EASY. By Rosy Tseng. Tuttle. \$2.75.

COIN COLLECTING IN A NUTSHELL. By Ted G. Wear. Doubleday. \$3.50.

CONSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS OF ANXIETY. Edited by Seward Hiltner and Karl Menninger. Abingdon. \$3.50.

FOLKLORE OF THE OIL INDUSTRY. By Mody C. Boatright. Southern Methodist Univ. Press. \$5.

THE GIRLS WE LEAVE BEHIND: A Terribly Scientific Study of American Women at Home. By Jerome Beatty, Jr. Doubleday. \$3.95.

THE GREAT BEACH. By John Hay. Doubleday. \$3.95.

THE PATTERN OF AUSTRALIAN CULTURE. Edited by A. L. McLeod. Cornell Univ. Press. \$7.50.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC. By George Campbell. Southern Illinois Univ. Press. \$7.

Music

THE JOSH WHITE SONG BOOK. Text by Robert Shelton. Quadrangle. Hardbound, \$6.95. Paperback, \$2.95.

Mysteries

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MIX #18. Edited by Ellery Queen. Random House. \$4.95.

RUN SCARED. By Mignon Eberhart. Random House. \$3.95.

Personal History

AND SUDDENLY IT'S EVENING. By Mabel Barbee Lee. Doubleday. \$3.95.

CHARLES, DUKE OF ORLEANS. By Norma Lore Goodrich. Macmillan. \$5.95.

EDGAR ALLAN POE: The Man Behind the Legend. By Edward Wagenknecht. Oxford Univ. Press. \$5.75.

EMPRESS JOSEPHINE. By Ernest John Knapton. Harvard Univ. Press. \$6.95.

A HIDDEN WORLD. By Raphael Rupert. World. \$4.50.

THE JANOWSKA ROAD. By Leon Weliczker Wells. Macmillan. \$4.95.

NEVER CRY WOLF. By Farley Mowat. Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$4.95.

THE NOTORIOUS DR. BAHRDT. By Sten Gunnar Flygot. Vanderbilt Univ. Press. \$6.50.

ON SAFARI: The Story of a Man's Life in Search of Adventure. By Armand Denis. Dutton. \$5.95.

THE REAL FIGARO: The Extraordinary Career of Caron de Beaumarchais. By Cynthia Cox. Coward-McCann. \$5.

TAKE ONE STEP. By Evelyn West Ayrault. Doubleday. \$4.50.

Religion, Philosophy

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THE FAILURE OF THEOLOGY IN MODERN LITERATURE. By John Killinger. Abingdon. \$5.

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE: The Jew in the Medieval World. Edited by Nahum N. Glatzer. Beacon. \$6.

A LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO PROTESTANT WORSHIP. By Homer J. R. Elford. Abingdon. Paperback, 75¢.

THE LIFE OF JESUS. By John Steinmann. Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$5.

TO LIGHT A CANDLE: The Autobiography of Father James Keller. Doubleday. \$4.50.

PHILOSOPHY IN PROGRESS: Fascicle I. By Paul Weiss. Southern Illinois Univ. Press. Paperback, \$1.25.

TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY. By Eric C. Rust. Oxford Univ. Press. \$6.

Sociology

CALIFORNIA: The New Society. By Remi Nadeau. McKay. \$5.50.

THE CENTURY OF SCIENCE. By Watson Davis. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$5.95.

YESTERDAY IN THE HILLS. By Floyd and Charles Watkins. Quadrangle. \$4.50.

—Compiled by RUTH BROWN.