

## Book Reviews

*Faith and Fiction: Creative Process in Greene and Mauriac.* By PHILIP STRATFORD.  
Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964. Pp. xiii, 346. \$5.95.

This is an excellent study of the subject indicated in the title: the relation between faith and fiction, as it appears in the works of Greene and Mauriac. It is not a study of influences; although Greene was at an impressionable age when he read Mauriac, Stratford concludes that the influence was nebulous. He considers these two writers together because their careers have followed roughly parallel courses: despite differences in style and tradition, they have faced many of the same creative problems, and their solutions often complement each other. As Catholic novelists, they have both been absorbed in the debate between artistic aims and religious beliefs. In Stratford's view, the tension arising from this unresolved conflict has given their work its singularity and distinction. Yet it should be emphasized that he is not writing a work of apologetics; in fact, it is impossible to tell from this book what religion its author professes, if indeed he professes any.

Though both write of childhood as the most susceptible and decisive period in life, one novelist has found his themes at home and the other has made a world-wide search for them. Mauriac thinks that it has been his special province to find analogies between landscape and character in the environs of Bordeaux; he actually says that the greatest good fortune that can befall a writer is to have had a provincial background. Asserting that a door closed within him at twenty on what was to be the subject of his novels, he declares, "I do not invent, I rediscover". His return to the past is not an effort at escape, but an effort at understanding—"a continued and generous effort", writes Stratford, "to understand the mysterious springs of childhood and adolescent sensibility which no simple psychological explanation can satisfy." His endeavour was to describe the prison of the self (and by implication the human condition) with the greatest possible lucidity, as a way of transcending the self. He has written, "Doubtless our *raison d'être*, the thing that gives validity to our absurd and strange profession, is the creation of a fictional world through which real men may see more clearly into their own hearts, and may feel towards one another more comprehension and pity."

Presumably it is because of a similar view of the need for charity in the writing of fiction that Greene remarks, "The creative act seems to remain a function of the religious mind." In his chapter "The Catholic Novelist and Creation", Stratford shows that for both Mauriac and Greene charity requires a Christ-like identification of the author with his characters. This identification precludes any simple inclination towards judgment and any efforts to regulate justice; it prevents both the creation of caricatures for the purpose of edification and the benevolent intervention in the destinies of characters. The true disciple, Mauriac writes, does not presume to change the destinies even of those he loves, but imitates Christ, "intervening only by the way of sacrifice and blood-letting." Sartre, however, contends that Mauriac, like the God of the Jansenists, has weighted the scales for or against his characters, controlled their destinies, and deprived them of free will. Mauriac is guilty of the sin of pride, for he has chosen a divine omniscience and omnipotence in the world of his creation: "God is not an artist; neither is M. Mauriac." But Stratford thinks that Sartre has mistaken the nature of Mauriac's involvement with his characters. Vanity has little to do with his exploration of them; indeed, it is not so much an act of self-indulgence as of self-sacrifice, for as Mauriac said, "To write is to deliver oneself up."

On Mauriac, Stratford is excellent, especially in showing that, when all the evidence has been accumulated to bring down a verdict of the most astringent Jansenism upon him, it is put in a different perspective by the realization that he is using physical love in a symbolic way, to indicate his basic convictions about the human condition. On Greene he is, if anything, better; it is almost safe to say that he puts Greene studies on an entirely new plane. His close knowledge of Greene makes him suggest that some of the famous stories about the writer's childhood may be leg-pulls; he also shows, however, that Greene has approached his profession with greater industry and seriousness than is generally realized—to think that his "entertainments" are light and trivial, for example, is to indulge in a popular misconception. He is especially good on Greene's later novels, showing that, whereas Mauriac has come to a pessimistic conclusion about the validity of the novelist's profession and has turned to political journalism (witness his recent study of De Gaulle), Greene has examined the same question, transmuted it into fiction, and made it a source of creative vitality. In *Wormold*, the hero of *Our Man in Havana*, Stratford sees an analogue for the creative artist—refusing to sit with the judges, unable to fool himself into thinking that he is an instrument of justice or an agent for this or that cause, condemned to sympathize with the other's point of view and to say, "There, and may God forgive me, goes myself." A simple label or formula cannot be found for either of these writers; Stratford never tries to set down, in point form, the views of Mauriac or the views of Greene, but instead tries to show the paradoxes and problems they have faced at various

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stages of their careers. It is in his subtle discussion of continuing dilemmas that the chief merit of his study lies.

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D. J. DOOLEY

*Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake.* By E. D. HIRSCH, JR. New Haven: Yale University Press [Montreal: McGill University Press], 1964. Pp. xv, 335. \$6.50.

This is not a good book and, frankly, I believe, not an honest one. Although I must admit that I am not in the mood for *another* "introduction" to William Blake, my mood has nothing to do with my assessment of Mr. Hirsch's book. It has been obvious for some time that introductions to Blake, which are all we have been getting in book form over the last ten years, are not what Blake scholarship needs. In fact, few of them have been really good and none of them superior. Along with its avowed introductory character, *Innocence and Experience* is to be faulted for its logic, its point of view, its scholarly opportunism, its insensitivity to the meaning of unity in art (especially Blake's), and its general perverseness. This is not to say that the book is worthless in all its details, for Hirsch does read sharply on occasion. Unfortunately, sound but random explications cannot save any kind of book, especially one that presumes to introduce Blake.

*Innocence and Experience* is divided almost evenly into two parts: (1) "The Course of Blake's Poetry", the poorer of the two parts, and (2) individual "Commentaries" on the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. There are four brief appendices which are insufficient in themselves. Hirsch's main point is announced on the first page of his Preface. Blake, he says, "changed his views radically" during his lifetime and "made these changes . . . the subject matter of his later poetry". He attacks the systematic criticism of Blake's work for having ignored these changes. Such criticism has adhered, in general, he says, to the principle most clearly enunciated in *Fearful Symmetry* by Frye, who says that each of Blake's works "whatever its date not only belongs in a unified scheme but is in accord with a permanent structure of ideas". In disagreeing with this approach to Blake, Hirsch fails to see that "a permanent structure of ideas" for an artist is a visionary whole, not a scholarly scaffolding. He fails to perceive that even if an artist does a complete about-face in certain areas of thought (from *The Wasteland* to *Four Quartets*, for instance), his life's work as a whole and the way in which he sees all things are other matters. Hirsch also fails to understand that each version of the *Songs of Innocence* or the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is a separate work of art, that, in fact, each plate of every song in either grouping is also a separate and a finished work of art—a "window into Eden", Blake would say. Hirsch speaks of the *Songs* as Blake's major work, ignoring the fact (a strange omission in this kind of study) that Blake

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viewed the *Songs* as something he could sell more readily than his prophetic books. To say that the *Songs* are a record of Blake's changing opinions is to claim that Blake reconceived the *Songs* as a work of art each time he reproduced it. If this is so (and it may well be so in a way which Hirsch does not understand), then he is seriously at fault for neglecting the changes in colouring and for de-emphasizing the importance of the visual side of Blake's total art, poorly argued as his de-emphasis is.

Hirsch's "divisionist" approach to Blake's work prevents him from carrying out his own best insights to their ultimate fructification. The best thing in his book, his understanding that to Blake God was both shepherd and sheep (or Lamb), parent and child, is never extended properly so as to illumine other matters. Had Hirsch really understood what is implied by this identity of creator and created, guardian and guarded, lover and beloved, many other passages and poems in Blake's work would not seem so mysterious to him as they do. His self-confessed difficulty with "The Blossom" is traceable to his inability to transfer his own best insight into Blake's creative and non-allegorical symbolism. His reading of "The Clod and the Pebble"—adequate as it is to a point—finally fails to recognize that neither a synthesis (Hegelian-like) nor a delicate balance of opposites (like the ironic fusions of metaphysical poets) has anything to do with the unity about which Blake's work is centred. The selfish pebble and the selfless clod do indeed need one another, but neither their opposition nor their marriage is a whole anything. The whole is in the art—the vision.

Hirsch's thesis that Blake changed his position from that of innocence with its emphasis upon God's immanence to naturalism, to disillusion with that naturalism, to an inadequate threefold or Beulah synthesis, to a repudiation of that synthesis, to innocence again, and finally, to some sort of general reshuffling of perspective, perverts everything Hirsch discusses, whether themes, symbols, or individual poems. His anti-systematic systemization is in the end even worse than the worst of the wholly imposed systems, such as gnosticism or neoplatonism. There is no reason to assume that the second version of *No Natural Religion* was written to supersede the first version, as Hirsch assumes, since they complement one another and do not contradict either Blake's steady vision or one another. To deduce that Blake has changed his mind is a *non sequitur*. Two series in no way suggest conclusively that Blake altered his ideas radically between 1788 and 1790. Hirsch's reasoning here, as elsewhere, is untenable. In developing a many-faceted perspective on all things, Blake was certainly not going to forgo both a negative and a positive statement on the same subject. This kind of development is, in fact, the source of his songs of experience, which came several years later than his songs of innocence. It is characteristic of all his work. Blake's views are not subject to oscillation; instead, they increase in dimension. That is why Los is a "vehicular terror". The perverseness and singlemindedness of Hirsch's approach upsets his entire critique, since he insists on reading many of the songs as self-satirical and

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the songs of experience as statements in reaction. It is an absurd position to take seriously, yet he seriously expects his reader to read Blake as if he were issuing documents from some vacillating government ministry instead of creating works of art that are complete and independent wholes.

For all the "wealth of bibliographical and chronological data" that the book is supposed to contain, Mr. Hirsch (1) repeats the nonsense about Blake's pre-1789 Swedenborgianism, though Erdman dispatched this incubus ten years ago in an article in *Comparative Literature*, (2) snatches passages out of context from *Jerusalem* in order to talk about "innocence" and "experience" because these words are used in a context that has nothing to do with innocence and experience, (3) fails to understand that since "Ulro" is a kind of perception, "Beulah in Ulro" is different from "Beulah" itself (which is also a kind of perception), (4) misunderstands completely the functions of the Zoas, (5) contradicts himself in his discussion of the last additions to *The Four Zoas*, (6) misreads "My Spectre around me night & day" (and other poems in the Rossetti manuscript), (7) acts as if he had just discovered some of the oldest and most tired anagrammatic readings of some of Blake's names (he ignores the really difficult ones), and (8) indicates clearly that he has no conception of what "Divine Vision" means when he says it is "bluntly defined, . . . the perception of a better world beyond this one". Blake is never otherworldly. *Innocence and Experience* is neither a good introduction to Blake's art nor a substantial contribution to Blakean scholarship.

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E. J. ROSE

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*Concepts of Criticism.* By RENE WELLEK. New Haven: Yale University Press [Montreal: McGill University Press], 1963. Pp. 403. Cloth \$7.50, Paper \$2.45.

This book is not a new work but a collection of essays published during the past two decades and here brought together for the first time. Two of the earlier and more influential pieces, "The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship" (1946) and "The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History" (1949), are reprinted with updated postscripts or revaluations appended to the original articles. As with any text of this kind, written piecemeal and in self-contained units over a long period of time, we cannot expect a sequential development of ideas which cohere around a single controlling interest. Each chapter is an independent essay and creates its own centre of interest, although Wellek's assumptions and methodology remain remarkably consistent irrespective of his subject. Whether he is discussing Russian Formalism or contemporary trends in English graduate studies (topics which illustrate the wide range covered by this book), he adheres to certain fundamental con-



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cepts which, in turn, impose a unified design on his several essays. I shall discuss the two most important concepts that inform these essays.

(1) *Criticism is value judgment, which is integral to literary study.* "All attempts to drain value from literature have failed and will fail because its very essence is value" (p. 68). Wellek believes that it is neither profitable nor, ultimately, even meaningful to apply dispassionate scientific techniques to literature. Thus he sets himself firmly in opposition to a tendency which goes back at least to the nineteenth century and has gathered new strength in the twentieth. I mean the tendency to analyze or describe *without evaluating*, whether the analysis or description be of the environmental or psychological forces which have helped to shape a work, or of the place of the work in a literary tradition or, more recently, of the structural and linguistic components which make for what we call the "form" of the work. "Objective" sociological or technical studies of this type, lacking principles of evaluation, are fruitless, according to Wellek, because in themselves they offer no means of determining the respective merits of Donne's "Valediction" as compared with Kilmer's "Trees", and thus no means of selecting which poem is more profitable to read. Our choices would have to be made at random, on the basis of personal whimsy or ignorance but indefensible on rational grounds. Most educated readers would select the "Valediction"; teachers of English literature in particular prefer literature which is intricate, paradoxical, even ambiguous (perhaps because it provides a fine field for the display of their own ingenuity and acumen), but Wellek maintains that such a preference is purely arbitrary unless it can be shown *why* a complex poem is better than a simple one, *why* concealed meaning is better than obvious meaning, and this implies an appeal to some standard of values which has nothing to do with mere analysis. Technical exegesis for its own sake, like Darwinian studies of the rise and fall of a genre, leads to a blank wall.

Although Wellek insists that the critic must judge, he does not open the door to relativism and its attendant in the wings, anarchy. Not all judgment is of equal merit; he is intolerant of judgment which is divorced from historical knowledge (familiarity with literary currents and the evolution of ideas) and theory (a clearly formulated system of values). And this leads us to his second major concept.

(2) *Criticism, history, and theory—the three literary disciplines—interpenetrate and together form the basis of sound scholarship.* No serious students of literature would dispute this tenet in the abstract, but in practice we tend to fall into particular niches; we are historians, philologists, formalists, or theorists, but rarely are we all these together. Usually we implicitly assume that one discipline can be isolated from the others, and are content to examine individual works in the light of their value as historical documents which we fit, like the pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, into an elaborate "history of ideas" mosaic. Or, conversely, we entirely dissociate the work from its intellectual and literary milieu under the mistaken impression that the object itself—without any special knowledge on the critic's part—can yield up

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its totality of meaning. Worst of all, we are occasionally so hypnotized by our abstruse hypothesizing that we lose all contact with the concrete art from which theory should take its being. Such exclusiveness of orientation can only impoverish literary study.

To pursue this train of thought further, it seems to me self-evident that any piece of literature exhibits in itself the three elements mentioned by Wellek. It is written in a particular place at a particular time and necessarily reflects this place and time as well as the literary tradition of which it is a part. It is premised on some theory (as Wellek calls it, a "system of values"), whether verbally explicated or not. And it constitutes a kind of criticism in the sense that it is a working out in practice of this theory. To do the work justice, our study should do no less than the work itself. It should put to use the triple disciplines of history, theory, and criticism. The great virtue of Wellek's book is that it does just this. In other words, he not only *tells* us how we should approach literature but *shows* us as well. *Concepts of Criticism* is a handbook which rigorously applies the principles it enunciates.

Wellek's insistence on the necessity of relating criticism to history and theory is indicative of the whole tendency of his book. He is concerned with unity, not diversity. "The Concept of Criticism in Literary History" ("The Unity of European Romanticism" is the sub-head), for instance, is a refutation of A. O. Lovejoy's contention that there are "a plurality of Romanticisms" which are "logically independent, and sometimes essentially antithetic to one another in their implication" ("On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," 1924). Wellek's position, which is substantiated by many specific examples, is that there exists a sufficient number of stylistic traits and ideas common to the national European literatures of the early nineteenth century to warrant the use of a single inclusive term. He takes an identical stance in his defense of "Baroque" as a definitive term to designate that literature which came after the Renaissance but before neoclassicism. Indeed, Wellek is the most outspoken modern proponent of the whole concept of period terms:

I have tried . . . to make a theoretical defense of the use and function of period terms. I concluded that one must conceive of them, not as arbitrary linguistic labels nor as metaphysical entities, but as names for systems of norms which dominate literature at a specific time of the historical process. The term "norms" is a convenient term for conventions, themes, philosophies, styles, and the like, while the word "domination" means the prevalence of one set of norms compared with the prevalence of another set in the past (p. 129).

Wellek is interested in pointing out likenesses, in showing the similarities of thought and feeling and form which bind together the various national literary movements in any given "period"; he argues that ideas and styles discovered in one

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European literature invariably receive an echo in others. For him European literature and culture forms a single complex, a continuum stretching from the Urals to Spain (and, since the nineteenth century, including America). Such a conception may seem quaintly mediaeval in today's world, given to ideological stratification and cultural differentiation. The old vision of European culture and literature as one cohesive entity has largely broken down, and with it the old terminology (Romanticism, Neoclassicism) which was premised on that vision. But it is precisely because Lovejoy's position has become so strongly entrenched in our scholarly journals that we need to be reminded of the unifying strands in our literature. Wellek's synthesizing view is the necessary corrective, provides the ideal tension, to Lovejoy's "discriminations".

Wellek is eminently qualified as an apostle of unity by both his cultural heritage and his interests. A central European and former member of the Prague Circle, now a professor of comparative literature at Yale University, he brings to his task a formidable array of knowledge (in aesthetics, philosophy, history) and an intimate familiarity with the whole spectrum of Slavic and Western languages and literatures. He moves easily and surely from a discussion of Flaubert to James to Goethe and the Schlegels, and is equally at home with Russian Futurism and Ernest Cassirer's symbolism. His references sometimes impress us as excessively esoteric, but it is precisely his design to draw on the full resources of European thinking about literature, to relate the ideas of an obscure Polish theorist to a well-known English critic and thereby call our attention to the parallels and resemblances which exist in the midst of apparent dissimilarity. Wellek sees literature in a spatial perspective, divided by "periods", and his frame is all of Europe.

One of the most valuable things in this text is, as the editor points out, Wellek's "analytical reviews of the work done by other scholars". He gives us a compendium of the important criticism written during the twentieth century. His last chapter, "Trends of Twentieth-Century Criticism", incorporates into the text a basic bibliography which is indispensable to the study of such important schools as the Neo-Aristotelians, the New Humanists, the Russian Formalists, the myth critics, the Marxist critics, and the New Critics. Wellek himself is predisposed toward the last group and highly praises such exponents of the New Criticism as William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks. Toward those of other persuasions he adopts a hostile attitude, surprising in one whose catholicity supposedly underlies his condemnation of one-sided and narrow approaches towards literature. He is particularly critical of T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, William Empson, and F. R. Leavis for their indifference to form, of Wayne C. Booth (whose *Rhetoric of Fiction* I believe is a landmark in the study of the novel) for philistinism, of Ronald Crane and Elder Olson for their "scientific pretensions", of Kenneth Burke for "fanciful or heavy-footed Marxist or psychoanalytic interpretations", and of Yvor Winters (possibly the best living American critic) for "dogmatism"—a charge, incidentally,



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which comes with ill grace from one whose own writing is characterized by a dogmatic and polemical tone.

Wellek seems to be oblivious to or unconcerned with the rhetorical function of literature—the way in which and the purpose for which the writer manoeuvres the reader into a particular emotional and intellectual position. He believes that literature deals with values, but he refuses to admit that it also deals with readers who respond in certain ways to these values and to the structures to which they adhere. It is not necessary to acquiesce in I. A. Richards' neurological concept of literature as a mystical organizer of our "impulses" to see that fiction and poetry are written to *affect* our attitudes—or in any case do affect them whether or not they are so intended. But to this aspect of literature Wellek is indifferent.

Yet to judge Wellek by his own yardstick, by how well he has succeeded in systematizing knowledge about literature and its values, is to agree that he has achieved his ends. There are some to whom systematization is profane, comparable to dissecting a treasured masterpiece for its "moral lesson". They are the emotion-ists, the anarchists, who instinctively shy away from that act of mind which alone can bring order and illuminate meaning. They prefer to welter in the chaos of vague or dimly apprehended "feelings". Wellek does not address himself to them. He addresses those who are interested in exact knowledge, rationally structured knowledge, about literature. His tools are adequate to his task—he has a broadly educated and firmly disciplined intelligence and a speculative curiosity which is securely rooted in literary facts. Perhaps most importantly, he reminds us that practice is dependent on theory and theory is tested by practice, and that an understanding of literary history is necessary to both.

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RONALD HAFTER

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*The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1836-1838.* Edited by Stephen E. Whicher, Robert E. Spiller, and Wallace E. Williams. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press [Toronto: Saunders of Toronto], 1964. Pp. xx, 494. \$12.50.

This is the second volume of Emerson's early lectures. The first covered the years 1833-1836. The lectures in Volume II are those which followed the publication of *Nature*, the essay that introduced Emerson to his public (anonymously) and that proclaimed the fundamental principles of American transcendentalism. Having essayed on *Nature*, he turned in two series of lectures to *History* and to *Culture*, and many passages from the two series were recast in later essays. The two series of lectures were of Emerson's own creation and were not written on an invited topic, as were a number of his earlier lectures. Volume II contains twenty-



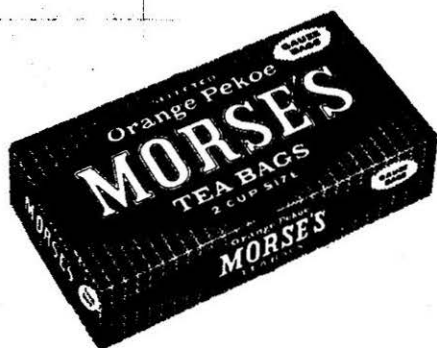
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three lectures, twelve of which are in the series on "The Philosophy of History" and ten of which are on "Human Culture". The other address was delivered at a school opening in 1837, and is, interestingly enough, on "Education". By 1838, Emerson had had his say publicly on Nature, History, Education, and Culture. At the age of thirty-five, he had truly begun his career as America's chief poet-philosopher.

The twelve lectures on "The Philosophy of History" were delivered weekly from December to March, 1836-1837, and complemented Emerson's assertion in *Nature* that "Our age is retrospective", that it lives in the vision of past generations rather than enjoys "an original relation to the universe". "Philosophy", he said, was "the only true historian, and the only true prophet". He was already, however, a confirmed poet. His lectures were effective because of his metaphors, analogies, and turns of phrase, not because of his logic. The most casual reader of *The American Scholar* will recognize in "The Philosophy of History" one of Emerson's favourite metaphorical correspondences:

How familiar is this abstraction to us all may be seen in the legal and diplomatic fiction that a population dwelling together is a body politic; that England is a man; France is a man; America a man. The Executive is the arm; the Legislative is the head; the character and wishes of the people are the heart. Injury to any citizen is felt as injury to all just as a blow upon any spot of a man's body is resented as a hurt to his whole person. In like manner we feign larger corporations as when Athens was anciently called the *eye* of the world; the commercial Lombards, the *legs*, and the Latins, the *tongue*.

The nation thinking was as rare as *man thinking*, and the universal nation as rare as the "Universal Man". In the decade to come, Emerson was to condemn the famous States for harrying Mexico with gun and knife. One can only wonder what he might have said of Viet Nam, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

Like many of his fellow English and American Romantics, Emerson passed through a Swedenborgian phase, and remarkably like Blake he was seized by the apocalyptic vision of the one and the many as a human form. It was the body politic in combination with the "philosophic imagination" that "made the celebrated Swedenborg describe each of the heavenly societies which he saw in vision as appearing at a distance in the shape of a man, but when he drew nearer, he found each to be composed of a multitude of individuals".

In the space of two paragraphs, Emerson could leap from the last canto of the *Paradiso* to the ninth night of *Night Thoughts* in his usual eclectic manner. No one was more open to the possibilities of a series (in 1837-1838) of lectures on "Human Culture" than Emerson. Nothing in the lectures in Volume II is more typical of him than his advice to his audience concerning practical rules for the cultivation of the intellect, the two rules which he obeyed himself:



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One is, sit alone. In your arrangements for your residence see that you have a chamber to yourself, though you sell your coat and wear a blanket.

The other is, keep a journal. Pay so much honor to the visits of Truth to your mind as to record those thoughts that have shone therein. I suppose every lover of truth would find his account in it if he never had two related thoughts without putting them down. It is not for what is recorded, though that may be the agreeable entertainment of later years, and the pleasant remembrances of what we were, but for the habit of rendering account to yourself of yourself in some more rigorous manner and at more certain intervals than mere conversation or casual reverie of solitude require.

It was with a similar sense of dedication to the life of the mind that Emerson dubbed his own journals his "Savings Bank", that made him in a "heedless" and "gross" world see that very world "illumined with meaning . . . every fact . . . magical; every atom alive, and [himself] heir of it all".

The new editions of Emerson's early lectures and the first four volumes of his journals and notebooks are major achievements in modern literary scholarship. They have proved so far to be accomplishments of which Harvard University Press and the various editors can be justly proud.

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