

Book Reviews

Aging, Death, and the Completion of Being. Edited by David D. Van Tassel. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979. Pp. xix, 293. Can. \$27.50.

One of the reasons the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Europe is marked by never-ending wars and silly crusades is that its population was, by our standards, so *young*. As late as the mid-seventeenth century only about three people out of a hundred survived sixty years or more: it was probably not uncommon for street urchins to follow an old man just to get a better look at this curiosity. Today the healthiest human beings in the world, Swedish females, die at an average age of seventy-eight. In North America males are now attaining seventy-two and females seventy-four years on average. But this is not because the human life span has increased. If cancer could be eradicated, two years would be added to normal life expectancy; if atherosclerosis, the main killer, were eliminated, another seven or eight years. But the background of degenerative processes would be unchanged, so we would succumb to other threats, such as accidents and respiratory infections, even if life expectancy were thereby increased to age eightyfive or so. What has happened is just that more and more humans are reaching the normal full span of life with improved living conditions and medical care.

Nevertheless, this increased aging of the human population has, in fortunate societies where it is taking place, created two major problems. One is that, combined with zero population growth, the burden of taking care of retired older people is increasing such that payroll collections from every two workers will soon be required to support each retiree, compared to every three a decade or so ago. The other is that if retirement age is not extended much, most older people will face ten or more years of enforced idleness awaiting death. In earlier ages, death was at everyone's shoulder all the time. Now we associate it, in the normal course of events, almost exclusively with being old. No wonder there has been a heightening awareness of and interest in death in our time. There are simply more people around expecting it.

The present collection of papers stems from a conference on aging and human values held in November 1975 at Case Western Reserve University for the specific purpose of stimulating research among scholars in the

humanities on the phenomenon of aging. The idea was to bring a humanistic perspective to bear on what it is like to grow old and face death, using materials drawn from history, philosophy, literature and the arts. How were old people treated in the past, in pre-industrial England and early colonial New England? How do middle-aged people now perceive their parents, as their own children leave home and become parents themselves? How did artists, novelists and poets as well as painters, come to regard their work in old age? Is it possible for a very old man or woman to take up creative work for the first time and make his/her last years the most self-satisfying ones? Is the struggle with lust in one's declining period a rejection of death, self-defeating because one turns towards youth for stimulation at the risk of public mockery?

These are but some of the many themes explored in this book, which nevertheless leaves one with many unanswered questions. Supposing the demographic and economic data are sound, what *can* one do for an ever-growing army of still active retirees without adding to the tax burden of a society already straining to support them at less than comfortable standards for longer and longer periods of time? Is there anything that scholars in the humanities in particular can do?

One development that has struck this reviewer over recent years is the increasing interest retired people are taking in university education, especially in the humanities. It is as if many of them feel they missed something important to their self-development in early life, for economic and domestic reasons, and that now that their working careers are over and familial obligations reduced, they would rather turn to the life of the mind and to art appreciation, etc. than vegetate at the fringe of a consumer culture with little in store for them.

If this impression is sound, promotion of university education for the aged would be beneficial not only for them but for public-supported institutions confronted with declining enrolments due to the same population growth restraints that makes it increasingly difficult to bear the costs of their retirement. The fact is that we academics have done very little to develop this trend, being content to have the occasional oldster in a sea (an ebbing sea at that) of young faces, when we know it simply cannot be true that everything should be taught the same way to people from opposite ends of the life cycle. Can *The Tempest* or *Death in Venice* mean the same to young students as to those near the end of their lives? Indeed, should these works not take on special significance to elderly people, as representing on the one hand the renunciation of, in Leslie Fiedler's interpretation in this collection, Eros and acceptance of Thanatos; or, on the other, a fatal refusal to renounce desire that then brings with it the plague? If there is some special viewpoint or perspective that advanced age provides in humanistic studies, should we not develop special curricula to offer to older people? If we did this, would not universities gain additional public support to help make up for the an-

ticipated decline in youthful student numbers? Higher education as gerontic therapy is an idea that has yet to be taken seriously.

One contributor to this volume went so far as to suggest that higher education in the humanities should be reserved for the elderly, leaving the youth to pursue technical and scientific subjects that are directly employment-related. This, in my view, is to sin in opposite direction, for the effect of such a shift would be to deprive those who will have the economic/political power of any humanistic vision or understanding, while relegating this to those who can no longer bring it to bear on social policy. The place of humanities in higher education is surely at the beginning of productive life. I am only suggesting that it could have a much greater place than now at the end of productive life as well.

Contributors to this collection of papers are, in alphabetical order: John Demos, Leon Edel, Erik H. Erikson, Leslie A. Fiedler, Tamara K. Hareven, Robert Kastenbaum, Robert R. Kohn, Juanita M. Kreps, Peter Laslett, Francis V. O'Conner, Robert F. Sayre, and David D. Van Tassel. The volume is available at list price from Pendragon House Ltd., 2525 Dunwin Drive, Mississauga, Ontario L5L 1T2.

Dalhousie University

Roland Puccetti

Bloomsbury: A House of Lions by Leon Edel. Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1979.

Leisurely, eloquently, with great intelligence and great understanding, Leon Edel tells the story of Bloomsbury and the nine unusual, talented men and women who were its principal members: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, J.M. Keynes, Duncan Grant, Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, and Desmond McCarthy. Of the nine only three—Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry, and Desmond McCarthy—led what might be called "conventional" lives, though Leonard was driven all his life by the demon of hard work and political ambition; Fry, an art critic and theorist who made Post-Impressionist painting respectable in England, spent years falling in and out of love with his pupil Vanessa Bell; Desmond McCarthy spent years doing practically nothing before turning his skillful hand to criticism. Virginia had her lesbianism and her bouts of madness— between which she wrote some of the most brilliant fiction and trenchant literary criticism in the English language. Clive and Vanessa, both highly original as, respectively, an art critic and a painter, spent most of their very productive lives apart: Clive with another woman, Vanessa with Duncan Grant, also a painter, after Duncan and Keynes ceased to be lovers. Keynes, whose economics endowed King's

College but gave the rest of the world a permanent cash flow problem, married a Russian ballerina after years of bisexuality. Strachey, whose revenge upon the examiners at Trinity who gave him only a second in the historical tripos consisted of *Eminent Victorians*, *Queen Victoria*, *Elizabeth and Essex* and other pieces of fiction, led a life almost exclusively homosexual, though his (largely female) companion Carrington had a healthy appetite for human beings of all sexes.

Edel is both a masterly storyteller and a brilliant writer, and his reconstruction of the Bloomsbury scene and its *personae* is another—after his wonderful five-volume life of Henry James—fascinating exercise in the art of biography. Edel interviewed both Leonard Woolf and Duncan Grant; his portraits of the other members of the Bloomsbury “gang,” as it was sometimes called during its heyday, manage to be unique as well as scholarly, a tribute to Edel’s originality in a field that has had more of its share of plodders in recent years. At moments here and there he has a tendency to indulge his imagination rather too much, and the result is some highly entertaining but fanciful (and unknowable) dialogue. Also the notes are thin, the documentation generally unsatisfactory. But these really are unimportant weaknesses, since the book is designed to tell a story rather than to break new ground. In this, certainly, *Bloomsbury: A House of Lions* succeeds admirably.

University of Southern California

John Halperin

Without Boundaries. Sans frontieres. By Hédi Bouraoui. Tr. by Keith Harrison. St. Louis: Francite, collection bilingue, 1979. Pp. 35.

The Toronto-based poet Hédi Bouraoui has created an impressive body of poetry with his lyrical *Musocktail* (1966) his iconoclastic *Tremblé* (1969), his magical *Eclate Module* (1972), and his volcanic *Vésuviade* (1976). This eruptive poetry proposes and embodies a new model of human involvement with things and language which often overpowers our capacities for understanding. It is therefore not surprising that English translators were slow in understanding the difficult task of attempting a translation. Keith Harrison’s excellent translation of twelve poems gathered in the bilingual volume *Without Boundaries* opens Bouraoui’s complex vision for the first time to the English-speaking public.

In these poems we encounter a poetic voice which escapes the too frequent tendency to mystify by achieving a delicate balance between hammering and playing. In the Nietzschean phrase, Bouraoui’s poetry dances in the chains it imposes upon itself. Faced with the contradictions of the human condition,

the singer dreams above all of an authentic rootedness in the earth: "To melt and disappear in you, my weeping earth/when my being has lost its spring." With a fragmented and lapidary syntax the voice takes us back and forth between past and future in order to gather within these temporal dimensions "the harmony" and "the energy" which so often escapes us in the present. All the while the torn voice beckons us to dig up our roots and to sink them down anew, in an effort "to found a country of my own."

Lucid vis-a-vis the basic contradictions of existence, Bouraoui, like the best modern poets, has a sharp awareness of the tragic function of the poet in the contemporary world as well as of his ambiguous relationship with language. In *Without Boundaries* the poet appears above all as the one who through his speaking and seeing becomes "the banished one." The task of the poet is problematic. His efforts direct themselves toward "inventing a text beyond the text,/the original thing, the primal feast," and he does this even though he is "caught in the piggy-bank of the text" and his head carries "carnival masks." The poet is tragically trapped first within language: "a double solitude: words, and myself," then within a world where "everything has to be explained," and where what he writes is forever threatened by cheap journalism or rampant romanticism. Thus a refusal, and also a will to surpass and start all over again, impose themselves onto the poetic consciousness.

However, the discovery of a new language does not merely presuppose new forms which can reshape human existence. Poetry conceived by Bouraoui is no longer versified rhetoric or personal confidence. These poems, as they sing the emergence of the things of the earth also celebrate simultaneously the event of the poem's birth in its musical and semantic fullness.

Perhaps because involvement in Bouraoui's virile and eruptive poetry is a powerful experience of the formative role of man, it is not always easy for the uninitiated reader to participate in it. Already in their original French we have to listen hard and work creatively with these poems. It is to the translator's credit to have caught and reproduced Bouraoui's spirit of linguistic and semantic playfulness. Harrison's rendition allows of a productive dialogue with the French original, thus helping us understand it. But Harrison is a poet in his own right, he is thoroughly grounded in the spirit of the English language. As he is translating the French poems he is listening to the address of his own language while hearkening to the French as well. For Harrison, translation is apparently not a matter of simply bringing an author over and naturalizing him into English. It is rather a matter of configuring his own language into a spirit which is at once compatible with the language and akin to that of the original. True, whenever a reader passes from the translation to the original, he *always* witnesses a change in spirit; but this is good, and can only happen in a productive way when the translation itself shows a spirit. Harrison's translation helps us to understand Bouraoui's

poems by inciting us to remain open to possibility and to respond to the multiplicity of things in human life.

Mount Allison University

Lilliane Welch

The Fenians and Canada. By Hereward Senior. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1978. Pp. viii, 176. Bibliographical note and Index.

The avowed aim of the Fenian organization—the name Fenian is an anglicised corruption of *Fiann*, the soldiers who followed the legendary Irish hero, Finn MacCool (Fionn MacCumhail), as the Knights of the Round Table followed King Arthur—was to establish an Irish republic. Membership of the organization was not confined to Ireland, but included North America as well. Although most North American Fenians were to be found in the United States, Fenianism also spread to Canada, creating a special problem, in the crucial years prior to Confederation, if only because Canadian Fenians saw themselves, not as Canadians, but as members of an Irish nation overseas. Fenian activities in Canada, political and military, must therefore be approached through an examination of the movement in Ireland and in the United States. And that is just what Professor Senior of McGill University has set out to do.

This book provides us with a documented account of the rise and fall of the Fenian movement with special reference to Canada. The author shows how the Fenian ambition of freeing Ireland “on the plains of Canada” (which included support of the War Hawks of 1812 and the annexation movement of the 1840s) confronted Canadian Irishmen with the dilemma of reconciling loyalty to their new country, Canada, with support of liberation movements in Ireland. The grandiose plan which resulted in the abortive attempt on Campobello Island, the successful engagement with the Canadian Militia at Riedgeway, and the two raids into Quebec, is discussed in detail drawn in large measure from documents in the Public Archives of Canada.

The bibliography of Fenianism is extensive, more so in the United States and Ireland than in Canada. Professor Senior's book is a useful addition to this bibliography. It is a scholarly, interesting and reliable account of the Canadian story, set in the larger framework; it illuminates a fascinating chapter of our history. A by-product of this account, perhaps unintentionally topical, is the role of the security service, which kept the British and Canadian authorities well informed of Fenian plans. There are few obvious errors in the book; although Professor Senior must be aware of the fact that the Canadian militiamen of 1866 were armed with Enfield, not Lee-Enfield muzzle-loaders.

Frosty Hollow, Sackville, N.B.

George F. G. Stanley

H. Rider Haggard, A Voice From the Infinite. By Peter Berresford Ellis. Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1978. £7.95. Pp. xiv., 291.

By the time Rider Haggard died in 1926 he had written fifty-four full length works of fiction, several volumes of short stories, ten works of non-fiction, a two-volume autobiography, and miscellaneous articles and pamphlets, and he had had a hand in several Royal Commission Reports. Even now we have not seen all—his World War I diaries are to be published shortly. The sheer bulk of his writings was matched by the extraordinary range of his interests: Africa, law, the Salvation Army, coastal erosion, agricultural reform, gardening, and Egyptology being merely the most prominent of many. This celebrated writer of romances, tireless traveller, and friend of Theodore Roosevelt, Rudyard Kipling, and Andrew Lang, was indeed a curiosity: President of both the anti-Bolshevist Liberty League and, strangely enough, the Vegetable, Fur and Feather Society, Haggard has fascinated his public for years. His books were serialized in the U.S. as well as in Britain. Several of his works, *King Solomon's Mines*, *She*, and *The World's Desire*, for example, are still in print. Late-night television brings Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Paul Robeson, Stewart Granger, and Deborah Kerr in two different film versions of the "Mines" adventure; lesser-known films based on his fiction have starred actors like Lon Chaney and Theda Bara. The parodies Haggard's works have inspired (*King Solomon's Wives*, *He*, etc.) have recently been reprinted, and the latest sequel to *She*, Peter Tremayne's *The Vengeance of She* (1978), comes with its own bibliography of Ayesha books. It was inevitable that, given the current interest in the corresponding fields of fantasy, children's literature, and popular culture, someone would want to write an account of Haggard as a popular cultural phenomenon. This is what Peter Berresford Ellis tries to do in *H. Rider Haggard, A Voice From the Infinite*.

Like others who develop an addiction for writers of prolific output and magnetic personality, Ellis gives us energy instead of order. In the realm of publishing, Ellis' energy rewards us with astonishing print run statistics for Haggard's books: "Up until 1900 average print runs had consisted of 10,000 copies except with a book like *Ayesha* which went to a staggering 25,000 copies" (179). Once involved in publishing trade journalism and author of several popular histories, Ellis has a keen eye for promising scraps of data. He has turned up a three-volume novel published in 1834 called *Ayesha, the Maid of Kars*, obviously the source of Haggard's own *Ayesha*, Queen of Kôr, and an interesting footnote to the once-heated controversy over charges of Haggard's plagiarism, since the two *Ayeshas*, reports Ellis, have no more than their name in common. Haggard was also charged with gross sensationalism, and so the comparative passages offered from the serial form of *She* in the *Graphic* and the modified first book edition are additionally welcome. Notes on Haggard's mother, whose own writings include a 127 verse poem entitled *Bianca: A Tale of Venice* and a nine canto poem, *Myra*,

or *the Rose of the East: A Tale of the Afghan War*, indicate the probable origins of Haggard's own literary sensibility as well as give a shadowy picture of yet one more Victorian woman whose domestic duties devoured the time that might have gone to writing. A filmography of Haggard's works and some marvellous photography illustrative of various aspects of his life are also in Ellis' book, and, more substantially, he has been able to make use of an unpublished biography on Haggard by Roger Lancelyn Green. Unfortunately, Ellis is not the cultural historian he needs to be to bring together the disparate pieces of his research.

To date, there are only two noteworthy critical pieces on Haggard: Morton Cohen's *Rider Haggard* (1960) and Alan Sandison's commentary in a chapter of his *The Wheel of Empire* (1967). Ellis' book is an advance on neither of these and is disturbingly derivative of both. From Cohen he takes his format, even to the chapter divisions, and from Sandison he takes the view of Haggard as an enlightened cultural relativist. Ellis, who is hardly a skilled literary critic, fails to understand Cohen's comments about Haggard as a writer and faults Cohen for not finding a place for Haggard among the literary immortals: "What other word but 'immortal' can describe *She* and *King Solomon's Mines* which inspired over a dozen film versions, stage productions, radio serials, and opera and even a ballet? Several times they have been transcribed to comic-strip forms and printed as full-colour comic books, the most recent of which has appeared, even as I write, from Marvel Comics" (5-6). Similarly undistinguished efforts at critical analysis are to be found in Ellis' presentation of Haggard as a man who lacked racial prejudice and cultural exclusiveness. Ellis first delivers Sandison's line that Haggard's conception of evolutionary change led him to repudiate the notion of a 'white man's burden,' and he then attributes every aggressive imperialist policy Haggard endorsed to either youthful naiveté or misunderstanding. Evidence to the contrary—Haggard's approval of the annexation of the Transvaal, his involvement in the National League for the Promotion of Physical and Moral Race Regeneration, and his public endorsement of a messianic imperial view, for example—are met with surprise and are rationalized away.

Ellis' book, questions of analysis aside, is badly written. The details of Haggard's personal life are scattered indiscriminately among discussions of his career: references to his daughters' marriages appear incongruously next to passages dealing with his work on coastal erosion and afforestation in a chapter ostensibly on Haggard as a public servant. This particular chapter begins with three pages of interesting but again incongruously placed material on Maurice Greiffenhagen, Haggard's illustrator and friend. Why this chapter location for Greiffenhagen and why we are told about another illustrator's being found shot in his studio or King Edward smoking a cigar on the day he died in the very same chapter is impossible to know. A skillful writer would have managed the transitions between these gossipy sidelights and the thematic whole, but not so Ellis.

A closing note on the documentation in this book. Neither publication information nor page numbers are given for any of the footnotes. Articles by Haggard appear not at the end of his works but after the filmography, parodies and sequels, unpublished sources, and major works on Haggard. Bibliographies of Haggard's writings are listed under the heading of Haggard's works. A few titles referred to in the text do not appear to be in the bibliography. Finally, there is an idiosyncratic and sometimes contradictory procedure for documenting quotations from Haggard's autobiography and from unpublished material in the Norfolk Record Office that seems designed to frustrate. A last complaint, there is no index.

Ellis' book is extremely disappointing, and the chief problem, I believe, is the quality of the enthusiasm. Given an intelligent enthusiast, even an apologist, an informal literary study may well succeed on its own terms, giving freely of rich personal insights and observations. A formal study is an altogether different animal, and it requires no less enthusiasm, perhaps, but far more learning. Ellis has tried to do a professional job with a rank amateur's tools, and the structure he has built will not stand up.

Halifax

Wendy Katz

The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918. by John Herd Thompson. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978. Pp. 207, \$6.95, paper.

This book is part of the publisher's social history series and treats the reaction of the three prairie provinces to the "Great War." It is an extremely useful book in that it offers a regional treatment of a subject that almost always is handled from a national viewpoint. The fact that Canadians displayed a remarkable degree of unity during the 1914-18 period has detracted from the continuing existence of regionalism during this period. Thus, charting the social history of the west during the war is often a matter of following a well-worn trail through rougher terrain rather than of breaking new ground. In fact, the most useful sections of the book document unique western reactions to the war rather than those the prairies shared with the rest of the country.

Thompson argues that the contribution of the west to the war was out of proportion to its total population, despite the fact that for several years prior to the war it was beset by serious social and economic problems. Westerners, like the rest of the country, responded enthusiastically to the war in its early stages. In fact, for the first two years the Borden government was unable to meet the demands of the west for places in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The idea of a war for democracy united the diverse immigrant groups who did not subscribe to the notion that Canada was a daughter of the British Empire and therefore should fight for the motherland.

Western farmers prospered as a result of the Allied demand for wheat, but badly needed diversification into other crops and into stock-raising was delayed by the war. Farmers complained that in a period of inflation which increased production costs, theirs was the only product whose price was fixed. Western cities did not share in the general prosperity. Munitions contracts were few in number, and sometimes awarded only for psychological reasons. The same National Policy that prevented the industrialization of the west in peacetime worked in wartime as well. Central Canada was given the bulk of the munitions contracts, and no special rates were granted the west for transportation of munitions manufactured there on the ground that a dangerous precedent would be created. To complicate matters, U.S. steel was not permitted in the manufacture of munitions (Ontario steel had to be shipped west before manufacturing could commence).

The English-Canadian culture of the west reacted to its large ethnic minorities during the war by support of internment, suppression of the foreign-language press and support of the passage of the Wartime Elections Act of 1917, which disenfranchised every enemy alien naturalized since 1902 and all conscientious objectors. The governments of the three provinces also pressed for suppression of non-English educational rights, that is, compulsory unilingual education, or, as it was known under another guise, "Canadianization." This method of assimilating the non-English speaking immigrant dated to before 1914, and wartime xenophobia only justified it the more.

The west overwhelmingly supported the Unionists who gained their parliamentary majority by almost sweeping the prairies. Support for the Union government partially was based on the hope that a non-partisan national government would end a two-party system in which central Canada dominated both parties. The Unionists also had identified themselves with conscription, and the English Protestant was reluctant to let Quebec's negative stand on the issue dictate the national position. Western support for conscription of men was linked to conscription of wealth, by which was meant the high profits of central Canadian manufacturers. When disappointment with the Union government set in, it was keen in the west. The tariff on farm machinery had not been reduced; the price of wheat had remained fixed; and exemption of agricultural workers from conscription had been rescinded. In addition, the national food programme included regulations unsuitable to the conditions of western Canada, e.g., in an area where fresh produce was so difficult to obtain, the ban on canning of fruits and vegetables was particularly hard.

The strength of *The Harvests of War*—its regional approach—is also its chief weakness. The reader requires a national framework in order to evaluate the relation of the part to the whole. For example, Thompson points out that British Columbia was awarded defence contracts worth fifty-eight million dollars, ten times the amount given to the three prairie provinces.

Neglect of the prairies assumes a proportion it otherwise would not have. But, on the whole, the partisan presentation of the west denies the reader the requisite broader perspective. It must be borne in mind that much western reaction to the war was synonymous with national reaction. Though the prairie provinces led the country in granting the provincial franchise to women, B.C. and Ontario were quick to follow, and the National Council of Women had supported women's voting rights since 1910. The women's rights movement in Canada was conservative and traditional, often designed only to defend marriage from alcohol. In this respect, the west did not differ significantly from the rest of the country. One can place undue emphasis on the fact that the franchise was granted to women first in the west. The same is true of prohibition. Though Saskatchewan began wartime restriction of liquor sales, the other provinces rapidly followed suit. Prohibition and patriotism were so closely linked that it is, perhaps, of greater significance that Quebec abstained from joining the provincial prohibitionists during the war. Like most of the rest of post-war Canada, the west accepted the principle of government-controlled sales of liquor rather than prohibition. The P.E.I. government had prohibited the sale of liquor throughout the entire island since 1906, and Prohibition remained in force there until 1948.

Moreover, many western regional grievances simply could not be dealt with in wartime conditions. In assessing the failure of the Union government to reduce the tariff on farm machinery, it must be borne in mind that the tariff was one of the principal sources of revenue in waging the war. In response to pressure for conscription of wealth, the government did introduce a business profits tax in 1916, and an income tax in 1917.

A more disinterested stance towards the region might have made this book more useful. *The Harvests of War* provides some significant data about the west that is stressed insufficiently in general discussions of the impact of the war, but the book should be used cautiously.

Dalhousie University

E.L. Bobak