

The "New Criticism" After Fifty Years: A Memoir

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MY ENTRANCE INTO graduate school occurred in 1938, as the shadow of war deepened over Europe, and the reality of American participation in the struggle continued to threaten my academic career for several years. At one moment in the mid-forties I seriously debated the obligation I might have to leave *academia* and enter military service in the Women's Army Corps. At another moment I applied for a summer position at the Glenn L. Martin defense plant and was not hired there because my interviewers recognized my anxiety that I would not be released from the war effort and allowed to complete my graduate studies. Little did I realize that the culmination of the war would offer an unusual opportunity for a teaching assignment as the G.I. Bill of Rights for the veterans created a great demand for new faculty. I also had no way of knowing that the universities would soon be swept by a new movement after 1945 that would challenge the very nature of literary study and the orientation of English departments across the country.

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My master's degree at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., was solidly based on the historical backgrounds of English literature, centered on the Renaissance. This type of study came to be called "the old Historicism." I learned its methodology largely through Edwin Greenlaw's monograph entitled *The Province of Literary History*,¹ and through my pro-seminar instructor, who had received his doctorate in the milieu of Johns Hopkins University. Greenlaw and his colleagues regarded graduate study as clearly distinct from literary criticism or aesthetic appreciation. It was a quest for the human spirit as reflected in literature, through the analysis of cross-currents in the intellectual life of an era. Such, for example, was the conflict of the Renaissance with the Reformation, in the work of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton.² Greenlaw said many times that an author's work was not a realistic reflection of everyday life, but rather a distilled expression of a worldview based on the political life, the philosophy, and the literary culture of his times.³

This type of work involved an exhaustive determination of a writer's sources, especially in ancient Graeco-Roman classical literature, so important for the understanding of Renaissance culture. While recognizing a writer's individual

genius, such study placed great stress on his translation or transformation of a distant age into the terms of his own epoch. Such a curriculum in literary history was not to be limited to major-authors' concentration, but to include minor writers who might well be vehicles for the spirit of an age without attaining a high degree of artistic achievement. Greenlaw regarded this historical study of texts as "a learning," a term he employed frequently to distinguish graduate research from college study, and which he insisted was the "chief business of the university" in the field of the humanities.

He regarded poetry itself as a "learning," parallel to the political and philosophical backgrounds of a text. This is the major divergence between his conception of literature and that of present-day thinkers who are known as "post-modernists." In Dante, Spenser, and Milton, he says, "we find in distilled and concentrated form the experience not merely of one man but of the Western European mind," and indeed the distilled spirit of all humanity. As Murray Krieger has said recently, it is precisely the Western European mind that is under siege today in many quarters by current skepticism.⁴

I have always valued the literary history acquired in my early graduate study. It gave me a solid foundation in English culture, especially of the Renaissance, that I later needed for other kinds of research and teaching. I did not experience a conflict or strain between the history of the human spirit and the so-called "New Criticism" that developed in the universities after the war. My master's thesis was a study of Shakespeare's military portrait of Cassio in the tragedy of *Othello*, and the doctoral dissertation was a search for the classical and medieval concepts of ingratitude as backgrounds for *King Lear*. I still find myself indebted to scholarly books that I read at

the time, like Basil Willey's *Seventeenth Century Background* (0000), Max Weber's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (0000), and H.J.C. Grierson's *Cross Currents in the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (0000).

After receiving the master's degree in English (1940) I resided in Baltimore for some temporary work. In a year or two I returned to the Catholic University of America to take up studies again in the English Department, this time for the doctorate. These were the years of World War II, the achievement of the doctor's degree in 1947, and the beginning of a university teaching career at my home institution.

At the return of military personnel to their faculty positions, a new type of literary study entered the language and literature departments of many institutions. It had been dubbed "The New Criticism" by John Crowe Ransom in his 1941 book of that title, although a more accurate term would have been "Formalism" or "Structuralism," as it came to be called.⁵ It was destined to hold center place for about twenty years in classrooms, lectures, and the "learned journals" of that era. Even *PMLA*, the bastion of literary history, opened its doors to literary theory. The old order was defunct, in its pre-war sense, and an exciting, stimulating revolution was at hand. Pro-seminars in literary criticism and theory found their places beside the older preparatory courses in bibliography, research tools, and "literary backgrounds." At my university all of this was symbolized by the appointment of J. Craig La Drière, to the English Department faculty, fresh from Harvard's Society of Fellows and a University of Michigan doctorate.

The development of Formalism in Europe has been chronicled by many writers, its early phases as Russian in the years before World War I.⁶ Ironically, it was in Russia that it met its first adversaries, in the Soviets' imposition of state

policies opposed to the autonomy of the arts, and this meant subjection of literary composition to the goals and techniques of communist propaganda. I was myself more familiar with the Slavic Formalism that emerged outside of Russia in the Prague Circle. The most important writer on my horizon at the close of the second war was René Wellek, whose criticism began appearing in English at this time. American grasp of the movement was slow in developing, and early writing showed little awareness of its Slavic roots. German "Gestalt psychology" had also made its way into American thought, however, and undergirded the concepts of Structuralism in literary theory.

Both the advocates and the enemies of the American Formalist movement often misinterpreted its fundamental principles, and this fact was immensely important in the subsequent history of criticism. Its leaders, especially Cleanth Brooks, while urging "close reading" of the literary text, tended in their practical criticism to analyze verbal complexity and image patterns to the neglect of other crucial structures, like the auditory devices of prosody, rhyme, assonance, and alliteration.⁷ The result was an absorption in meaning rather than form. This rhetorical emphasis was true also of critics in the British tradition of post-Arnoldian culture like F.R. Leavis and others who were writing for *Scrutiny* magazine, like John Speirs. Even T. S. Eliot, whose position was ambivalent at best, gradually moved away from the autonomy of the art object to its practical expressionist function of instruction in moral and religious content.⁸

The opponents of artistic autonomy, on the other hand, attacked the New Criticism as irresponsible and equivalent to "art for art's sake." To them this new approach was *la trahison des clercs*. Eventually, however, the learned journals overflowed with Formalist analyses, because "publish or perish" had come to

mean close reading in some form of stylistics. "We are all Structuralists today," one of my friends admitted.

There was a way out of this polarized conflict, a deep study of the history of criticism, with a recognition that the basic conflict between the two viewpoints was not "new" but was as old as Greek culture, and was epitomized in the clash of Platonic and Aristotelian approaches to literature. This understanding of the problem, fortunately, was available to me in my graduate student and early teaching days, because it permeated the courses and the lectures to which I had access. It was also recognized by coteries of writers around the country, like the Chicago Aristotelians, and by individuals (like W.K. Wimsatt and René Wellek) with an ability to transcend partisan differences and to arrive at a syncretism in viewpoints.

I found the best exposition of the ancient classical debate in an article by G.F. Else.⁹ I have read and reflected upon it again and again over the years. Else recognized the stern moral approach to literature, particularly to drama, in Platonic thought. He grasped in the Aristotelian *Poetics* an effort to counteract this negative evaluation of literary art by discovering the Platonic criteria for legitimate pleasure in the very art object itself. Both philosophers, thoroughly classical in temperament, regarded limit or measure as the essential quality of the object to be contemplated, but Aristotle differed from Plato in finding this limit and measure in the harmony and proportion of the tragic action (for tragic action is the focus of the *Poetics*). The moulding and restraining of undisciplined passion into the beauty of poetic drama was the creation of limit and measure, the creation of *form*. Pity and fear (those powerful emotions aroused by the tragic action) were to be purified in the very process of their formation into a symmetrical harmony, and their negative

power was to be structured into dignity and elegance by the "sweetness" of language. This sweetness is a literary concept, a designation for the devices that constitute the symmetry and pattern that mould the raw material into a thing of beauty, worthy to be contemplated by the serious and cultivated beholder. Although the catharsis of pity and fear in the Aristotelian prescription has been the subject of much debate, Else sees a whole aesthetic here involved and I think it has had great implications for structuralist criticism. Herein lies a case for the protective, positive value of literary form, a kind of "scrim curtain" (as I call it) for the distancing of the evil and the ugly from their destructive power over the reader or the audience. Destroy this curtain (as happens in deconstructionist criticism today), and the defense of poetry collapses.

Such a conception of form raises the question of the autonomy of art. What does this vexed word really mean? In spite of the road blocks created by its opponents and the excessive claims made by extremist promoters, the great literary work, as a formal object, is not irresponsible. It is addressed to the "serious man," to use the Aristotelian notion of tragic action as a norm for the product of the creative imagination. The artistry may have extraneous or accidental features that appeal to the discursive reasoning powers of the reader, but *as art* it does not need these fringe benefits to justify itself. It is its own excuse for being and exists *sui generis* as a product of inspiration, skill, and craftsmanship. It is the synthesis of ideas, sound patterns, cadences (whether of poetry or of prose), and verbal embellishments that separate the object from ordinary discourse and raise it to a level of splendor and sometimes of grandeur. It is comparable to the glory of a symphony or an oratorio in the realm of music. It fulfills the classical Greek conception of *tò kalón*, the

beautiful.

The literary work is, moreover, a fiction, in the literal sense of the Latin root *fingere*, to make; it is an instance of *poetic*, taking that word as a noun, corresponding to *rhetoric*. It is to be judged not by its imitation of real life, although the successful work creates an illusion of reality. It differs from a newspaper account of conflict, or violence, or heroism by the structure that transforms the bald depiction of life as we know it in ordinary existence, to a higher level. We have art, as it is said, that we may not die of the truth.¹⁰ If the artistry is genuine, it must, in some degree, be an alienation from reality, and a product of the imagination, deviating from the prosaic account of facts and statistics. This is precisely why it is not a scientific treatise or a pedagogical instrument. An epic or a play, for example, is a dangerous construct if it is read simply as a guide to life. It is also potentially misleading if it is used as psychological therapy, because it is scientifically inaccurate and may be devastating to a person who is in need of clinical diagnosis and treatment. The therapist who subordinates the verbal beauty and the rhythmic harmonies of poetry to the practical task of healing a patient, or counseling a student, takes an enormous risk of error in pedagogical technique.

This cautionary statement is not to be taken as a rejection of poetic, but rather as an indication that who teaches literature should be thoroughly grounded in the riches of one's materials and also in their limitations. Rhetoric has a role in literary composition, for poetry may communicate knowledge in a persuasive way. I am convinced that a literary work can be a fine stimulus to deep thought and educational instruction, but only if the teacher *and* the student have training in the devices of both rhetoric and poetic, and know how to judge the text as the complex object it is.

The problem of communication in poetry, that is, the instrumental function of language in a work of literary art, is more difficult to clarify in literature than in the other arts. Connoisseurs of music are content to enjoy its rhythms, chords, and melodies without an effort to conceptualize a message conveyed by the sound patterns. Lovers of painting or sculpture may contemplate light and shadow, line and mass, colors and figures without pressing on to political, social, or philosophical messages. But students of literature, as Formalists would say, must contemplate language in a context that tempts them to draw into consciousness the language of ordinary discourse in a way that is largely absent in the other arts. One of La Drière's most fundamental propositions was that poetry *may* communicate, but it is not *as* poetry that it does so. In other words, it is the rhetoric, embedded in the poem, that communicates; but the total meaning of the work is non-conceptual, and cannot be reduced to discursive statement.¹¹ John Crowe Ransom put it somewhat differently, but aimed at the same outcome: poetic has a logical structure upon which a texture of beauty is woven, that texture not essentially subservient to the logic, not necessarily functional to the conceptual content.¹²

As a medievalist, I found myself during the 1950s and 1960s in a somewhat anomalous situation in the world of academic gatherings and conventions. I was enthusiastic about Formalism and also about historical study. For a long stretch of years at this time, most medievalists remained aloof from Structuralism. First of all, devotees of this movement were primarily Slavic, German, and American, so that Romance scholars seemed to view the Formalist analysis of literary works as a "northern" phenomenon, alien to their Mediterranean disciplines. Moreover, the bulk of modern scholarship on the Middle Ages had been done by French

historians rather than by literary critics. France had been the cultural center of medieval life and had created the literary genres of troubadour lyric, the romance, the fabliau, and the liturgical drama. Consequently, modern studies of the Middle Ages, developing in the late nineteenth century, have been concentrated on historical approaches to literature, rather than on stylistics, from Josef Bedier and Gaston Paris, to Gustav Cohen and Eugène Vinaver in our century. Medieval culture has been home territory not only for French universities, but also for their presses and learned societies. It is therefore not surprising that Deconstruction found an early champion in a French scholar, Jacques Derrida, in the waning years of Formalism.

The one area of medieval studies that became genuinely hospitable to Formalism was Chaucer scholarship, from 1950 to 1965. Charles Muscatine's monograph, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*,¹³ set the pace by a division of Chaucer's style into Gothic Idealism and Naturalism, played off against each other. I found this book absorbing, in its concept of non-representationalism as the dominant technique of the romances and the saints' legends in the Chaucerian canon, a static, allegorical pattern of character drawing and narrative line. The notion of character as metaphor rather than as personality was striking; and metaphor as symbol for interior, psychological states. This insight was new to me in my early teaching days, and a revelation of literary technique that could embrace the characters even of medieval drama. I began to see the mystery plays and moralities as I had not before understood them. Much of my own work in the drama developed from Muscatine's exposition, and the grand style of Gothic Idealism emerged for me as a device played off against the racy, comic *patois* of fabliau Naturalism, not only in a narrative context but also in the dramatic structure of the religious plays.¹⁴

Muscatine's essay on Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" seems to me a striking example of Formalist criticism.¹⁵ He recognized the narrative of the story that had been supplied by Boccaccio's *Il Teseida*, but he also admitted that plot had little importance in the English version of the star-crossed lovers (Palemon and Arcite). The center of the tale's meaning and of its literary artistry was the splendor of the noble, or courtly, life. Taking his cue from Robert Kilburn Root's designation of the poem as a splendid tapestry, Muscatine highlighted its pageantry, its slowly moving action, and its gaily colored accoutrements as the substance of this romance. All of its elements adumbrate the literary tradition of the garden in Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la rose*, including the spring-time setting and the pivotal use of May as context: the lovers' first sight of Emily, Theseus's discovery of their duel, and the grand tournament in which he arranges the trial by battle for the rivalry of Palemon and Arcite.

The resonance of the tale's rhythmic movement, the formality of its courtly rituals, and the use of French terms for its idyllic vocabulary illustrate the transcendence of the work beyond the limits of English poetry in the late fourteenth century. The total meaning, in Formalist terms, is the nonconceptual aura of imaginative, chivalric design, deriving its beauty from the rich connotations of its word treasure and the sophistication of its courtly patterns, so different from those of the contemporary English alliterative tradition. Muscatine launched Formalist criticism into scholarly medieval studies. The Old Historicism of the 1920s and 1930s gave way for a time to structural analysis and aesthetic appreciation.¹⁶

Chaucerian poetic began also to invite reflection at this time on the device of an authorial mask or *persona*,¹⁷ the image of a shy, reticent, inexperienced fellow be-

hind which lay, half-concealed, the best-read man in England and one of the most sophisticated writers in all of Europe. This duality exploited the riches of comic incongruity and, in addition, gave the fictive narrator an opportunity to pose as an uninstructed learner seeking wisdom. Many medieval narrative poets had provided exemplars for this device—Dante, Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, and William Langland, to name only a few. The whole genre of dream vision literature, within and outside of the Rose Garden, stands behind the quest for knowledge about human emotion that Chaucer structured into the *Canterbury Tales* through the use of the fictive persona. It was the criticism of the Formalist decades that brought this element into prominence.

Much of my own research and writing has been a structural analysis of poetic form in the English mystery plays, especially in the Towneley cycle, in which I discern a complexity of various patterns. There is, first, a lyrical grandeur played off against a rough Yorkshire dialect. Then there is a skillful use of complexity in the building of character constructs with different levels or "aspects of voice" (La Drière's term). The Bethlehem shepherds in the two Christmas plays there, by the "Wakefield Master," show an amazing alienation from character realism by quarreling over sheep-buying and stealing for many lines and then suddenly rising to the grandeur of Gothic Idealism as they discuss the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah, on their way to the stable.¹⁸ Moreover, their "Hail Lyrics" accompany the presentation of gifts to the child with obvious stylistic imitation of the formal grandeur in the Latin Sequences of the Christmas Mass liturgy and in the Latin Christmas plays from the Continent. Each of their presentation stanzas opens with this richly structured rapture and closes with a *cauda* of shy, homely affection as the individual

shepherd offers a ball, a bird, or a coffer to the new-born. In these analyses I have felt no conflict between an interest in literary beauty and a curiosity about the history of medieval liturgy, social life, and village customs.

Chaucer, Langland, and the Wakefield Master (dramatist), as creative writers, can be seen as geniuses in world literature precisely because their adjustment of poetic and rhetoric to each other exemplifies the relationship of the two entities in any great creative writing. All literature is to some degree propaganda, George Orwell once wrote,¹⁹ recognizing that an author's outlook on life and his beliefs make their way out of the poetic cosmos and into the reader's consciousness as the total meaning unfolds, that is, Chaucer's smiling absorption in human foibles as well as Langland's melancholy pilgrimage amid human evils. It seems to me that a proper comprehension of the shifting roles of rhetoric and poetic in a literary work would give promise of a reconciliation between Structuralists and their opponents. The rescue of the soundest elements in Formalism could mean a rapprochement with the movement of Deconstruction in our late twentieth-century confusion. To this possibility I now wish to turn in conclusion.

Formalism flourished until the middle 1960s, a generation of "close reading," a scrutiny of literary texts for their interior relationships in a harmonious whole. The attack upon the method was part of a larger revolution against the philosophy and culture of Western Europe. The movement is designated as Post-modernism, and it calls into question not only literary criticism but also the texts themselves that constitute the pride and achievement of the last three centuries. The weapon of attack is often a technique of "Deconstruction," which aims to explode long-accepted thought processes as well as the products created by them. The

basic problem, then, is one of metaphysics and logic, but the effects on literature are devastating; a demolition of aesthetic values has occurred in literary circles. Frank Lentricchia, a Duke University professor, in a recent article of *Lingua Franca*, has admitted that students are being "highjacked" and cut off from enthusiastic appreciation of literature.²⁰ I see the practical goal as a direct attack upon "poetic" and an assault on the text as an art object. I also think that some developments within Formalism, like Cleanth Brooks's analysis of symbolism in *The Well Wrought Urn*, had opened the way to Deconstruction and a type of Romanticism that is in conflict with the Aristotelian tradition of classical literary theory.²¹

In its deepest reaches Post-modernism seems to be an attack on "logocentrism," the traditional acceptance of the stability between a word and its referent, as Murray Krieger has explained.²² This undermining of the verbal relationship to external reality would eradicate the possibility of objective truth and perhaps even of logical reasoning. The resulting chaos destroys metaphysical thought and replaces it with "discourse" that is fluctuating and unsteady, so that even historical records become fluid, unverifiable, and suspect. This seems to be Nihilism and it affects historical writing as well as literary appreciation.

The "New Historicism" is an outgrowth of this attack on logocentrism, but it takes many forms. Donna C. Stanton, in a *PMLA* editorial of 1994, observed that "there is no agreement about what new historicism is,"²³ and H. Aram Veesser's collection of essays in a book of that name, gives an overwhelming array of attempts to define the movement. The term itself is credited to Stephen Greenblatt, who later chose another designation for it, "Cultural Poetics."²⁴

The major efforts of the New Historicism have been the work of Renaissance specialists, replacing Edwin Greenlaw's

quest for the human spirit reflected in Renaissance literature with a preoccupation fundamentally political and economic. Advocates of the method seem to be analyzing a dominant ideological mindset in the era's expression of political power, yet one that is accompanied by an undercurrent of subversive but suppressed revolt against this prevailing power structure.

These movements came late into my own academic career, and my reaction was one of alienation and bafflement. I did, however, make an intensive study of a particular group in the larger movements, that of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, led by Hans-Robert Jauss at the University of Konstanz in southern Germany. While writing a book on drama in the Gallican liturgy of the sixth to eighth centuries, I encountered Jauss's theory of literary genre, applied directly to medieval literature.²⁵ He denied the existence of drama in Christian culture before the twelfth century, and found no "horizon of expectation" in Europe for drama during more than a thousand years. This is not the moment for polemic on such a matter, since I have undertaken it elsewhere,²⁶ but the discrepancy with his *Rezeptionsästhetik* runs deep in my own thinking and writing.

[Author's Note: "I am indebted to Elaine Moser for the memoir-format of this paper, and to Dr. Deborah Curren-Aquino of the Folger Library, for reading it and making suggestions for revision."]

1. Edwin Greenlaw, *The Province of Literary History* (Baltimore, 1931). 2. Greenlaw, 84. 3. Greenlaw, 103. 4. Murray Krieger, *The Institution of Theory* (Baltimore, 1994), 16-17. 5. I am using the terms "New Criticism," "Formalism," and "Structuralism" interchangeably throughout the present essay, but I recognize that the three terms have resonances that they do not share with one another. Their common ground is the mid-twentieth century concentration on interior relationships in a text, as opposed to extraneous forces like history and sociology. 6. See Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary*

There have been indications that the intellectual movements of recent decades are on the wane.²⁷ Cultural phenomena, like Formalism and Post-modernism, have a life of about twenty-five or thirty years and then subside. The pendulum swings back and forth, and perhaps a new era of Formalism, resting on a classical theory like Aristotelian aesthetics, can then develop and successfully use some of the Deconstructionist techniques. If the poetic cosmos can be granted a fundamental freedom to enclose the speaker and addressee in a framework of constructed artistry, this speech construct, as La Drière put it, can be overheard by an extrinsic audience. These exterior readers or listeners can then respond at will to the rhetoric of the logical discourse embedded within the total structure of the work, accepting or rejecting its persuasive appeal. The reader-response to the poem as a whole would be an openness to a mysterious enthrallment created by a kind of magic: a beautiful harmony of ideas, music, and sound patterns that holds them temporarily spellbound or in a suspension of disbelief. This outcome could be the achievement of the New Criticism after a half-century of development.

Literary Theory, 3rd ed. (Lexington, 1993), "Russian Formalism," 27-45. 7. Ronald Crane challenged Brooks' restriction of poetry to a single principle of paradox or irony. "Cleanth Brooks; or the Bankruptcy of Critical Monism," *MP* 45 (1948), 226-45. Mark Winchell has recently admitted that Brooks, and his collaborator, Robert Penn Warren, really defined poetry as a form of rhetorical discourse, in their popular anthology, *Understanding Poetry. Cleanth Brooks and the Rise of Modern Criticism* (Charlottesville, 1996), 158 and 410-22. 8. Compare Eliot's statement in the original edition of *The Sacred Wood*, 1920, with his preface to its second edition, 1928. Carol Smith discusses this shift toward the close relationship between poetry and religion in *T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice* (Princeton, 1963), 14-21. 9. G.F. Else, "Aristotle and the Beauty of Tragedy," *Harvard Studies in Classical*

Philology, 49 (1938), 179-204. **10.** I have met this maxim a number of times, and once seen it attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche. **11.** Much of Professor La Drière's theory was worked out in his class lectures, and in campus-wide discussions of philosophical and literary topics, such as those sponsored by the Albertus Magnus Society. On March 26, 1950, he dealt with the question of communication in poetry. He also contributed about fifteen articles, such as "Voice and Address," "Form," and "Prosody" to the various editions of the *Dictionary of World Literature*, ed. Joseph Shipley (New York: The Philosophical Library). His monograph, *Directions in Contemporary Criticism* (Milwaukee, 1953) had as a fundamental theme that much of twentieth-century criticism has remained Romantic in a post-Arnoldian sense. **12.** Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, Conn., 1941), 25, 50-54, and 274. **13.** Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley, 1957, 1964). **14.** Muscatine's obvious political interest in the two styles as "courtly" and "bourgeois" is not essential to his analyses. Per Nykrog's study of the fabliau technique as a comic level of courtly narrative serves as a corrective here. *Les Fabliaux: étude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale* (Copenhagen, 1957). **15.** Muscatine, 175-190. **16.** About a decade after his book appeared, Muscatine reported a trend toward the "New Historicism" in Chaucer studies ["Chaucer in an Age of Criticism," *MLQ*, 25 [1964], 473-78]. His recent article in *Profession*, '96 finds

fault with both the New Criticism and Deconstruction (New York, 1996): 115-20. **17.** See, e.g., E. Talbot Donaldson's *Speaking of Chaucer* (London, 1970). **18.** See, e.g., "The Literary Style of the Towneley Plays," *American Benedictine Review* 20 (1969), 481-504. **19.** Orwell's opinion is quoted by Albert Halsall in "Le Roman historico-didactique, *Poétique* 15 (1984), 104 n. 35. **20.** Lentricchia's article, which appeared in the September-October issue of *LF*, was reviewed by Don Aucoin in *The Baltimore Sun*, 15 September 1996, H6. **21.** René Wellek discusses a lecture given by Mario Praz in 1965, in which the great Italian professor of English literature expressed pessimism about the coming decline and fall of literary criticism. He was disturbed about mythopoetic studies, and analyses of symbols and ambiguities, which had become part of the New Criticism. *A History of Modern Criticism* (New Haven, 1992), 8:267. **22.** Krieger, 16-17 and 39-40. **23.** Stanton, "What is Literature?—1994," *PMLA* 109 (1994), 359-64. **24.** Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York, 1989), 1-14. **25.** Jauss's work has been translated selectively in French and English publications, notably in a University of Minnesota series entitled *Theory and History of Literature*, 2 (1982) and 3 (1983). **26.** Dunn, *The Gallican Saint's Life and the Late Roman Dramatic Tradition* (Washington, D.C., 1989), 6-7, 48-52. Selden and Widdowson, 6-7; Krieger *passim*.