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[Review of the book The British search by sea for the Northwest Passage, 1719-1794 by Glyndwer Williams (London: Longmans, 1962)]

1963
Johannesburg College of Education
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child off from his rightful inheritance of English Poetry. While still at school he should indeed sample the heady whimsy of much of the Romantic movement, the intensely personal explorations of the Lake Poets, the humility and wonder that touches life with a delicacy strange to metropolitan children unaware of a pre-industrial world, But such an experience requires from ordinary young people a degree of mutual and linguistic sophistication rare unless they are peculiarly and happily gifted and many a future businessman or engineer is permanently alienated from poetry at this mid-secondary school stage by the failure of enthusiastic teachers to understand the imaginative and emotional needs of modern pupils.

In appreciating this problem and attempting to solve it in the Albemarle Books, the editor has performed a most useful service. This work is not to be recommended as a bedside book, however; for it was after midnight when this reviewer had read almost every single poem in Book One, with that sort of guilty feeling one gets from being lost in an Encyclopaedia. But although few of us read poetry by the hour one has no feeling of mental flatulence from this delightful introduction to poets such as John Wain, Carl Sanburg, Patrick Kavanah and Christopher Logue, to mention but four.

It was pleasant to see leading Americans printed, and even happier to find that an English editor was capable of breaking through the usually chaste bounds of provincial English educational thought to include Commonwealth and South African writers. On his next revision—and I would suggest that this anthology is destined for a long run if it is capably handled—it would be possible to suggest new names. Of course, it is *always* possible to do that, and not particularly clever.

Grading is always a problem, and ultimately must refer to a particlar pupil context; but accepting that, there did not appear to this reviewer to be a sufficient movement of development from the beginning of the first book to the end of the second. One can read both books without discovering the principle applied in the grading at all.

Format, general appearance and price are all very satisfactory. This book is one that experienced teachers will want to use.—B.W.R.

English Critical Texts

D. J. Enright & Ernst de Chickera (O.U.P.)

The texts range from the 16th to the 20th century and include Philip Sidney, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, William Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge, P. B. Shelley, John Keats, Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis. In other words, the backbone of Saintsbury's *Loci Critici* is reassembled. The large classical component that Saintsbury used has been relegated in somewhat reduced form to the "Classical Appendix" and two modern critics have been added.

Of course, in assessing the value of such a work two points occur. Should students have access to other people's *opinions* at all, or should they first learn *to respond to literature* as a *first-hand* experience, and only much later enquire what men and women of repute have thought? Does the study of critical writing not perhaps lead to a stuffing of minds with other people's ideas—all, no matter how good, second-hand? There are many university lecturers in English who would regard the collecting of critical comment with some suspicion. And yet there is no doubt that if we, as readers, are to move from mere liking or disliking of what we read to a more articulate and rational position, we must provide ourselves with the literary tools. And a judicious examination of approaches made by men of lively mind and real sensitivity may help the student to organise and to actualise his own incoherent reactions more rapidly than the slow process of trial and error. No other discipline would permit the student to pursue so cumbersome a learning process as the mere recapitulation which is frequently involved in the protest against the use of opinion and reaction other than one's own. So perhaps there is still a need for a work of this sort. The title limits the contents to *English Critical Texts*, but whether the compilers intentionally limited their collection to the work of Englishmen or whether by "English" they intend all who use the English Language, is indeed doubtful. It seems odd to exclude for instance all American critics. One thinks of *The Art of Fiction* by Henry James, and Edgar Allen Poe's thoughts on *The Poetic Principle*. John Crow Ransom has written on Poetry, and is rewarding to the student of informed critical thinking.

The Editors themselves offer in their introduction a most pleasant essay on literary criticism, which this reviewer found most stimulating and pleasantly provoking. With the addition of some American work, possibly a little Australian, and perhaps something more than Mr. Leavis—such as the writing of John Wain, who is often well worth one's attention, this book would have presented a better front. Perhaps publisher and authors would keep this in mind when—as we hope—a second edition is to be considered.—B.W.R.

The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century

Williams

Glyndwer Williams has produced a gripping story of the hazards of 18th Century naval exploration in the North Seas and has shown real insight into,

and understanding of, the human behaviour upon which the success of such discoveries depends. His characterization of the explorers, Knight, Dobbs, Pond, Cook and Vancouver are excellent commentaries of that view of History which holds that, "History is the lives and actions of great men." (Carlyle's romantic theory, which though a half truth, is worthy of appreciation, and which Williams has noted.)

But the real value of the book lies in the understanding it gives of the complex problems that confronted the patriots, geographers, seamen and trade enthusiasts of the 18th century.

With extensive evidence to substantiate his judgments, and comprehensive footnotes (amply illustrating Williams' scholarship), he points out the obstacles in the way of successful exploration. Williams describes clearly the initial opposition of the British Government (who feared to cross swords with the Hudson Bay Company), and contrasts it with their later attitude, after the Peace of Paris, when new strategic and commercial motives became evident. He vividly narrates the physical problems of the ice, inadequate shipping, and disease recurrent on all the voyages. Furthermore, he emphasises the discouragement which the constant threats of war against Spain and France provided. He gives adequate consideration to the question of finance, which clearly would determine the undertaking of the voyages. He points out that the apathy of the British public towards such expeditions, coupled with the disillusionment experienced after the failure of each successive voyage, resulted in only limited finance being available and so provides the explanation for the comparatively few voyages undertaken at that time.

There is an illuminating account of the effect which the then popular geographical theories had upon British opinion. He uses, for example, the then accepted authentic account of the Fuca voyage and the Fonte Letters as a background, and he develops the theme of the explosion of these "myths and fables". He contrasts well the sanguine theories of the speculative geographers with the frustrating experiences of the explorers.

In his description of each voyage, Williams gives a just and reasoned explanation of the causes of their failures, but he does add a critical commentary (Cook's voyage, for example).

Towards the Hudson Bay Company, Williams maintains a severely critical attitude for its blatantly commercial motives and its lack of co-operation with the undertakings made by the explorers, Knight, Moor, Middleton; yet he draws attention to the fact that even the enthusiast Dobbs was in no way motivated by purely scientific zeal. Despite his criticism of the Company, he does present their view, and reveals that the secrecy required of the Company was partially responsible for the widely held view that they were persistently obstructive and entirely unenthusiastic towards the discovery of the Northwest Passage.

In his final analysis Williams explains that the limited achievements of the eighteenth century may be attributed to a lack of drive caused by the obvious conclusion that such a route would be uneconomic for trade purposes. He concludes that it was not till considerations of purely scientific interest, national prestige and sheer zest for exploration became universal, as in the 19th century, that the discovery of the Northwest Passage became a realizable goal.

Criticism of the book is to be found in a certain repetitiveness and dullness, when vivid narration is replaced by a dreary account of the controversy in England. I consider that the work would be greatly improved by a series of well drawn, clearly illustrated maps showing the development of knowledge of the Northwest Passage from the 16th century onwards, and including a map of the Northern coastline of America as it is known today. This would best clarify certain confusing facts detailed.

This book will appeal to a limited reading public, but as a reference book for the specialist, I would give it my warmest recommendation. Williams has revealed himself as an excellent narrator. But more important, his schoarship, his mastery of the facts, his complete study of the background motive and his strong evidence and supporting statements to corroborate the unbiased and fair judgments he makes, rank him as an historian of great merit.—C.E.K.

British Journal of Education Studies, Vol X, 1961-2

(Faber and Faber)

Price to non-subscribers R1 per half-yearly copy: annual subscription R1.85.

This issue deals with the contributions of some eminent men to the philosophy, history, theory and practice of education. In doing so, it describes the lives and work of, for example, Sir Godfrey Thomson, Sir Percy Nunn and Simon Somerville Laurie.

Included in the contents there are discussions on such topics as: implementing the Education Act of 1902; middle class education; and examinations.

A useful addition to periodical educational literature.