

the model offered makes that endeavour redundant. In concentrating on the materials of Dickens's imagination, and delineating this allegorized world, Professor Newcomb has begged the questions of origin and motivation as well as operation, both in Dickens and his readers, and has sidestepped the issue of how conscious, determined, and controlled are his imaginative effects. There is a strange disjunction between the elaborate coherence of her allegorical model and her incuriosity as to its operations. What precisely are the implications of her conclusion, that 'with much admitted sacrifice of complexity, the story of the tapestried imagination can be readily organized into logical discourse and can be retold as the allegory of a nineteenth-century Everyman'? What is the accuracy, or the aptness, of the further suggestion that 'whereas the egocentric being shrinks into a frozen or mechanical imitation of human life, the being of Everyman has expanded to assimilate the whole of humanity'? And what is the value of the summary observation that 'recognizing the unified mode of experience controlling and stabilizing the richly varied materials of life that burst from his novels leads finally to a new respect for the mind of Charles Dickens'? I doubt it.

UNIVERSITY OF READING

NICOLA BRADBURY

Great Expectations. By ANNY SADRIN. (Unwin Critical Library) London: Unwin Hyman. 1988. xiii + 290 pp. £28.00.

The Companion to 'A Tale of Two Cities'. By ANDREW SANDERS. (The Dickens Companions) London, Boston, Sydney, and Wellington: Unwin Hyman. 1988. xvi + 176 pp. £30.00.

The French Revolution: A History. By THOMAS CARLYLE. Edited by K. J. FIELDING and DAVID SORENSEN. (World's Classics) Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 1989. xlii + 501 pp. + 527 pp. £7.95.

While writing *Great Expectations* Dickens told Forster that 'the difficulty of space is CRUSHING' and, in our own time, Angus Wilson has described the book as 'perfect' but 'two dimensional' beside *Little Dorrit*. No such doubts trouble Anny Sadrin's helpful study: the novel's current status as a sacred text emerges from it impregnable (though untested).

Perhaps it is unfair to expect criticism from a book which offers itself as a study manual. Yet any descriptive commentary inevitably entails value-judgements. In this case, the character of the explication tends to determine the kind of literary qualities the novel is credited with. For instance, much ingenuity is expended on analysing characters such as Miss Havisham and Orlick, whereas the role of Estella, more resistant to pat psychological readings, tends to be played down. The effect of this is to make the novel itself appear more cerebral, even though it is arguable that what makes Estella interesting is precisely the fact that she is so hard to explain. Professor Sadrin seems to begin from the premise that everything in the novel is part of a 'message' (as she calls it on page 105) and her delighted cleverness in unravelling it makes Dickens seem consciously clever too. On the other hand, she has remarkably little to say about the book's marvellously suggestive prose, perhaps because the meanings it enacts cannot be reduced to clear-cut moral perceptions. One explanation for the popularity of *Great Expectations* is that it encourages both the poet and the moralist in us but few critics manage to pursue both approaches at once.

Professor Sadrin is more reliable as a guide to specific problems than when she is being speculative. On such things as the novel's chronology, the debt of the original ending to Lever's *A Day's Ride*, or what Dickens made of the White Woman of Berners Street she proves a precise and attentive reader who can deploy her learning in a lively and readable way. Much of her book will help any student of the novel;

only part of it (the chapter entitled 'Oedipus and Telemachus' in particular) becomes far-fetched and novelistic in its eagerness to explain everything. She may help to create more *knowing* readers of the novel but, on balance, she does more to create more attentive ones.

What Andrew Sanders offers is, to quote his general editors, a 'factual rather than critical' annotation of the complete novel (but *not* a scholarly analysis of textual variants). *A Tale of Two Cities* responds particularly well to such treatment and the job is meticulously done. The story of Carlyle sending cart-loads of books on the French Revolution round to Dickens is well-known. What Dr Sanders's work brings out is how carefully he studied them when he got them and how much care he took in making the detail and the chronology of his novel as accurate as possible. It is also revealing to see how closely he drew on records such as Mercier's *Le Tableau de Paris* (all twelve volumes of it) and Arthur Young's *Travels in France*. Dickens emerges from these notes as a much more serious historian and much less of a 'romantic' storyteller than the popular image of him would have us believe. Dr Sanders also makes clear how serious was his interest in all things French (he spoke the language fluently), thus helping to dispel any notion that the novel is aggressively 'British' in the manner of Miss Pross. The *Companion* also has a useful 'factual' introduction, mainly about the novel's inception. No attempt, however, is made to place *A Tale of Two Cities* within Dickens's work as a whole.

Opinions will vary as to the usefulness of expensive volumes made up almost entirely of annotations, though the Dickens Companions are clearly indispensable to the scholar. A non-specialist reader, however, simply wanting to understand the novel's imaginative genesis, might be better advised to postpone all footnotes and go straight back to Carlyle himself. Dr Sanders discusses him as an historical influence on Dickens but has little to say about his literary impact on him. This is a complex and somewhat neglected subject and there is an incentive to study it in the shape of the excellent new World's Classics edition of the two-volume 1857 version of *The French Revolution*. It is clearly printed, adequately but not excessively annotated, and just about manageable in one fat volume. K. J. Fielding's introduction provides a perceptive and sympathetic account of Carlyle's view of the writing of history. Students of Dickens will find the volume just as useful and much more affordable than many of the books directly aimed at them.

UNIVERSITY OF READING

DAVID GERVAIS

Poetry in the Age of Democracy: The Literary Criticism of Matthew Arnold. By MARY W. SCHNEIDER. Kansas: University Press of Kansas. 1989. xii + 228 pp. \$22.50.

Mary W. Schneider sets out her intentions in the Preface:

In this study of the literary criticism of Matthew Arnold, I look at the answers that Arnold gave to the question of the kind of poetry — and more broadly, literature — necessary in a democratic age. The clearest results, in my view, could be achieved by a study of his literary criticism, rather than his social criticism or theological essays. For this reason I have not included *Culture and Anarchy*, the books on religion, or the poetry.

The book is intended as a 'magisterial study', and the point is made that if such a study 'is to succeed, it must, to some extent, depend on investigations of special problems'. The special problem Professor Schneider addresses is the task of collating Arnold's views with those of his friends: 'Because these friends were, in fact, classical scholars, which Arnold himself was not, as well as literary critics, the problem, so limited, reveals not only some shared assumptions but also significant differences in a long-continued debate about the place that poetry should hold in the new age.'

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