John Donne Journal,
Vol. 4, no. 1 (1985)

Genre, Genius, and Genealogy: Revising Literary History

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John Porter Houston. *The Rhetoric of Poetry in the Renaissance and Seventeenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. 317.

Eugene R. Kintgen. *The Perception of Poetry*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. xi, 269.

David Quint. *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. xii, 263.

William Elford Rogers. *The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. vii, 277.

Matters of authority—variously defined in terms of stylistic models and development, origin and originality, and genre and genius—are central in different ways to these four volumes. Central too are matters of authority and interpretation: the continuity or discontinuity of literary theory, the problematic dialectic of different modes of reading (in the Renaissance and in current critical enterprise), and the convergence of or breach between acts and theories of interpretation and creation. Three of the four volumes attempt to contribute to literary history in a way which may revise the making of such a history. Given the renewed attempt to analyze how the text produces significance within Renaissance humanism and the increasingly historical understanding of the text within the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the studies of Houston, Quint, and Rogers would seem to be especially rich in significant possibilities.

John Porter Houston's *The Rhetoric of Poetry* is in some senses the most traditional of the three attempts to reassess the history of literary development. Yet it is nothing less than an attempt to critique and replace the canonic compartmentalization of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature into Renaissance, mannerist, baroque, and neoclassical styles. To a great extent, Houston succeeds in his project. Rhetorical analysis and definition are primary in his exposition of the development of an equivalent to ancient high style in the literatures of the English and continental Renaissance. So explicated, literary text and history alike are freed from such abstractions as "the conceitful character of baroque figures" and "the high seriousness of neoclassicism" (pp. 244-45) which, as Houston shows, inhibit our understanding the subtle similarities and differences within alternately separate and overlapping layers of literature. The pedagogical boon of his study is a warning against any false concept of periodization. Supplied with the sense of complexity and perpetuity of the evolution of rhetorical theory and stylistic practice so richly addressed in this book, we should feel less compelled to return to familiar or outworn schematizations.

At the very outset, Houston defines rhetorical notions not as a matter of pure theory, but as things "empirical, growing out of the practice of major writers" (p. 5). So they originate; so they are addressed by the better rhetoricians; so they should be employed in our own interpretive discourse. This concept of rhetorical styles or *genera dicendi* informs Houston's analyses of selected but seminal works in his tracing of the historical movement of a literary aesthetic from Italy to France to England. Though these readings are by the necessities of the thesis highly technical in focus, Houston carries them out with a quiet panache. Obviously at home within the major literatures and languages of the Renaissance, he executes his explications with attention to the specific structural possibilities of Italian, French, and English. He is also at home with the ideas of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Demetrius, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *The Rhetoric of Poetry* adds significantly to such works as James L. Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1974), Richard A. Lanham's *The Motives of Eloquence* (New Haven, 1976), William J. Kennedy's *Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven, 1978), and O. B. Hardison's *The Enduring Monument* (Chapel Hill, 1962), a book whose influence Houston acknowledges. It also gives us comparative interpretive enterprise at its best. Still, the study is not for the

uninitiated or the faint of heart. Houston eschews a proliferation of technical terms but does assume a familiarity with ancient terms for style and with the Renaissance dissemination of rhetorical concepts. In order to realize the interpretive contribution which *The Rhetoric of Poetry* endeavors to make, the reader must consider the book in its totality. The nine chapters, covering authors from Petrarch to Racine and Milton, are ultimately less significant as discrete units than as coincidental stagings of a progressive technical elevation of style.

Both the precision of the individual readings and the expansiveness of the complete study (the book covers the major poetic forms within the literatures of four nations across the span of two hundred years) make it difficult to summarize Houston's contributions. The author commences with a consideration of the "smooth middle style" in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and establishes that canzoni 125, 126 and 127 constitute a practical *ars poetica*, demonstrating the possibilities of stylistic range and experiment within love poetry. Houston takes up this paradigm as it comes to inform the school of Bembo, the *Délie* of Maurice Scève, the *Deffense* of Du Bellay and *Amours* of Ronsard, and the *Printemps* of d'Aubigne. He shows that we do find occasions of a style which complies neither with the notions of a "smooth middle style" nor with those of a "grandiose high style" and asserts that in order to understand the range of style within these works we must turn to rhetorical theories which augment the usual three-style division. He refers us to an impressive array of such works, including the writings of Demetrius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus as well as Quintilian. Having moved through a discussion of these materials, Houston can close his second chapter, "Middle Style Genres," with a redefinition of mannerism as something of "greater practical than theoretical value," something "inferior, in any case, to a close rhetorical description" (p. 53). In fact, a zealous, persistent concern with the redefinition of terms comes to the fore in subsequent chapters (though he defends his reappraisal in the context of the rhetorical concerns of the Renaissance writer) as Houston reexamines stylistic definition in the concurrent appearance of the "low-style" in eclogue, rapid narrative, and elegy; discusses the difficult endeavors toward the "classicizing high style" in Ronsard, Tasso, and Spenser; relates the "peculiarities" of Shakespeare's tragic rhetoric to an aesthetic of linguistic discordance; and observes the figural commonality of the "baroque" and "neoclassical" styles. The final chapters of *The Rhetoric of Poetry*

celebrate the consummation of the classical tradition, with all of its resources of kind, within the rhetorics of Milton and Racine.

Donne is addressed in two chapters. "Some Uses of Low Style" analyzes "A Feaver," "Love's Infiniteness," and "The Good-Morrow," among other poems from *The Elegies* and *Songs and Sonnets*, to document that Donne does not reject foreign poetic rhetoric out of hand, but confronts an acknowledged source with the immediacies of a radically altered context. In a later chapter ("Devotional Poetry: A Confluence of Styles"), Houston reads the "Anniversaries" and "Good Friday, 1613: Riding Westward" as poems which collapse or dismantle the "traditional" barrier between secular and high devotional meditation. Houston's explications of these texts are sound in their consideration of rhetoric and useful as far as they go. Here we should remember that Houston's project is less fully interpretive than specifically comparative. *The Rhetoric of Poetry*'s almost encyclopedic cast precludes the semiotic dazzle of in-depth, textual analysis. At points, its scope may engender certain flaws. Houston prefaces his discussion of the devotional verse of Donne, for instance, in a way which belies the fact that he relies on canonic abstractions and categories in the center of a project exposing their inadequacies:

> Donne's devotional poetry is somewhat miscellaneous, with both major and quite minor work. The small number of holy sonnets not infrequently quoted resemble European seventeenth-century poets' work more in style and theme than Donne usually does, and although they are, in part, of considerable distinction, I shall ignore them as lacking the peculiar Donnic stamp. (p. 189)

When Houston does come to hazard an assessment of relative value, appraising the "Second Anniversary," it seems first that he will skirt the task, deferring to others regarding Donne's "presumed" care in the composition of the poem. But he does follow through by saying that "poetry about the progress of the soul must always . . . suffer a bit in comparison with the example of Dante, who tends to make his successors sound unduly pompous" (p. 191). Given the difference between a Christian epic unfolding in a medieval, sacramental poetic and a Renaissance meditation cast in a world in which (as Rosalie Colie taught us not so recently) paradoxes in rhetoric, ontology, and theology radically redefine the relation of writer, text, and audience, Houston's remark seems to

ignore both stylistic developments and cultural contexts. Here, we see him stray from the rigors of his own project.

If I have pushed for an extension of the interpretive context in which Houston executes his readings, it is not to say that his book has any real shortcomings. Fuller readings consistently hover between his fine stylistic plottings. There are ideas for us to pursue in a variety of texts and contexts of our own, and certainly *The Rhetoric of Poetry* will be a valuable sourcebook for further reading and research. Its learning is prodigious, its evidence carefully marshalled, and its strengths are not inconsiderable strengths of traditional comparative and historical criticism.

David Quint's *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature*, another comparativist's attempt to refocus attention upon literary evolution and experimentation, is also concerned with the influence of the rhetorical and philological program of Italian humanism. Focusing on problems of literary change, historical understanding, and prior authority, *Origin and Originality*, based upon the dissertation which Quint wrote under the direction of Thomas Greene, traces the topos of the source, or the confluent origin of the rivers of the earth, from its origins in Plato's *Phaedo* and Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue* to its re-emergence in the Renaissance literatures of Europe and England. In Quint's account, the source topos reappears to converge with a cultural attempt to define the individuality of a textual artifact, as well as the individuality of its creator, in specifically historical terms. The roots of such a cultural effort reside, for Quint, in the Renaissance assertion of self addressed by such historians as Burckhardt and Garin. Like Burckhardt, Quint sees the "new spirit of secularism" (p. x) give rise to the new sense of the individual, and, like Garin, identifies this spirit as that of historical criticism.

It is, of course, the emphasis upon historical consciousness which endows the source topos with its real significance, for, more so than any other commonplace, it simultaneously marks a literal, geographical place (a fixed place of origin for commonwealth, commonality, etc.) and a symbolic convergence of meanings predicated upon the linguistic and epistemological urgencies of a separate age. Variously charged with Judaeo-Christian meanings, fused with myths of life-giving waters and ideas of universality, the source topos receives increasingly expanded meanings throughout the literatures of the Renaissance. Quint illuminates such an accretion of meaning in selected, but major works by Sannazaro, Tasso, Bruno, Spenser, and Rabelais. Four discrete, interpretive

essays form the core of his book. The readings offered therein are clearly more than a seeking after common strands of imagery, metaphor, and classical citation; they anatomize the dilemma of the Renaissance writer who realizes that he must simultaneously imitate a prior model and yet establish a difference from that model. Quint's readings are foregrounded by the observations raised in the opening chapters, "The Counterfeit and the Original" and "The Virgilian Source."

Imitatio, as Thomas Greene demonstrates so well in *The Light in Troy* (New Haven, 1982), is of necessity engaged in a variety of uses. The Renaissance writer's stance toward his prior, classical models must be flexible (alternately remembering and dismembering) if the past is to be prevented from overwhelming the present. But *imitatio* looks forward as well as back. As the Renaissance writer discovers that classical texts can be counterfeited and as certain forgeries merit greater praise than certain ancient originals, the issue of aesthetic valorization is revolutionized. There is no guarantee that the worth of either an ancient original or a current *essai* toward originality will not be debased by the appearance of an artifact more perfectly wrought within the same medium (p. 4). Thus, Quint concludes, the stage came to be set for a debate between allegory and historicism as two different modes of reading and valorizing a text.

In Quint's scheme, allegory returns the Renaissance reader to those verities which he has already assimilated. The historicist reading, on the other hand, confers meaning not within an extra-textual, authoritative origin, but within the independent, intrinsic assertions of the text itself. Quint analyzes the shifting tensions of this debate in Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*. He goes on to suggest that the source episode at the end of the fourth book of the *Georgics* presents the Renaissance author with the metapoetic constituents of his authorial dilemma. He explicates the Aristaeus-Orpheus episode to identify the interpretive modes of history and allegory at the heart of the Renaissance debate over signification. Proteus becomes the embodiment of "a vatic poetry that re-presented the truth of a timeless source" (p. 42), and the poetry of Orpheus becomes "the self-expression of its autonomous creator, a discourse caught in the flow of time and history" (p. 42). The explication is evocative and convincing with respect to Virgil and his Renaissance descendants. In the central poetic enterprise of his career, between the pastoral exercise of the *Eclogues* and the epic

accomplishment of the *Aeneid*, looking to the past and the future, Virgil envisions the possibility of a union between poetry and history; but Quint demonstrates that the metapoetic dilemma becomes infinitely more complex for Virgil's heirs. If, as Michael Putnam has suggested in *Virgil's Poem of the Earth* (Princeton, 1979), Virgil succeeds in conquering his poetic past in the fourth book of the *Georgics*, we should remember that in large part he conquers his own poetic past, the *Eclogues*. The Renaissance poet's past is considerably more distant, more poignant, and more problematic.

For Quint, Sannazaro is a Renaissance poet making precisely this attempt to move from the literal primitivism of the pastoral fiction to a subtending of literature in authorized truth. Quint details Sannazaro's inability to produce the mediating text, showing that his career is divided into counterexclusive embraces of historicism and allegory. Sannazaro ultimately recoils from "the bad dream of history" (p. 63), flowing out of the Neapolitan source in the river Sebeto, to immerse the poem in the promise of immortality, flowing from the god of the Jordan. With Tasso, Quint documents a second surrender of poetic autonomy to the authority of Scripture, a surrender which is also preceded by a serious flirtation with autonomy. For Tasso, the balance between autonomy and authority is especially precarious, problematized by his simultaneous attraction to the liberating, but finally absurdist implications of the model of Ariosto and his fear that such a model of signification may preclude Christian ethics and ideology. Moving from the dialectics of historicism and allegory in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* to the final installments of the *Conquistata*, Quint charts how Christian truth and its typological language seem increasingly opposed and unrelated to the Counter-Reformation poet's fictional world.

In a chapter somewhat less rich interpretively than the Tasso and Sannazaro essays, Quint takes up Bruno's *Eroici Furori* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Again, his choice of texts and his analyses underscore the dichotomization of poetry and truth, this time within two contemporaneous configurations of the circular river-source. Bruno's Thames is "one manifestation of an eternally available, ubiquitous source" (p. 137); Spenser's, by contrast, is defined by particular, historical circumstances in the promise of Elizabeth's imperial reign. Quint reminds us of Bruno's doctrine of an infinite universe, his dehistorization of the Christian Logos, and his insistence that a perpetual mystical process rather than a

moment of revelation renders enlightenment. Reading the *Eroici* against these backgrounds, Quint shows how Bruno seems to advance toward a resolution between authorial individuality and transcendent meaning; but Quint uncovers certain breaches in this attempted resolution, and thus reveals how Bruno's and Spenser's projects converge. In *The Faerie Queene,* Spenser attempts to join the timeless and the world of history, but the Blatant Beast rends the historical allegory beyond repair, exposing the disparity between the poem's fictions and the historical facts. In Quint's reading, Spenser, like Sannazaro, turns in the Thames and Medway episode (and later in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*) from the muddy waters of political history "to rejoin the timelessness of the source to a Protean world of history and nature" (p. 161). With Spenser, one does wish that Quint had done more. His discussion, heavily influenced by James Nornberg's *The Analogy of the Faerie Queene* (Princeton, 1976), raises valid, but perhaps incomplete, observations about the poem. One wonders what, for instance, a consideration of Jonathan Goldberg's reading of the river marriage in *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore, 1981) as an episode concerning "the authority of the other" might have contributed to Quint's argument.

Quint concludes his history of the source topos with an extended reading of Rabelais' *Tiers Livre,* though he does take up Milton's parodic use of the topos in a brief epilogue. For Quint, Rabelais is that writer who seems most able to reconcile the claims of authority with those of individuality. He resolves history and allegory not by the gargantuan efforts of the writer alone, but by calling the writer and reader together "as interpreters in a future closure of meaning" (p. 204). Rabelais stands outside what we might plot his place to be in a strictly chronological movement from tradition to modernity. But the movement from origin to originality is one of perpetual advances and retreats, a movement which must be repeated in separate ways by separate individuals. Quint's essay on Rabelais stands at the end of an otherwise chronological sequence of readings. Quint so shapes his argument in order to refer us to the Erasmian issues posited in chapter one. There is something beautifully deft about this act of dislocation and reflection, an act which turns aside traditional expectations of a literary history. Quint makes a resourceful return to his own beginnings.

He also makes major contributions to our understanding of literary theory and criticism as it relates to the Renaissance. *Origin*

and Originality should influence not only how we read works in which versions of the source appear but also how we understand related thematic motives, including the myths of Orpheus and Proteus (addressed within the study at several turns) and the myths of Marsyas and Narcissus (who hover in the margins at their different pools of poetic truth). Quint helps us consider the rich definition of text and textuality in the Renaissance (and beyond), and he suggests the ways in which Derridean concepts of openness, polyvalence, and disclosure may be responsibly applied to discussions of the period:

> The Renaissance author emerged as original at the moment when a traditional and authoritative canon was historicized and relativized. And, in order to accommodate him—once innovation became the criterion for admission—the canon had to expand into the future. The impulse to originality came to inform all realms of human thought and discourse, formerly closed, now irreversibly open-ended. What Renaissance poets had begun to learn was learnt over and over again. There could be no return to the source. Originality had become the source of authority. (p. 220)

Clearly the insights of *Origin and Originality* will be richly extended within future discussions of Renaissance literature.

William Elford Rogers' *The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric* represents a strikingly different attempt toward reassessing literary history and its acts of interpretation, an attempt which applies a specific model of interpretation to a series of paradigmatic problems in the development of lyric. Rogers' model constitutes a new theory of genre. Reconceiving the idea of genre by endowing it with reflexivity, Rogers asserts that genre theory should be "no more, and, no less, than a theory about *interpretation*, a kind of 'metacriticism'"; that "the function of genre-concepts is to help in articulating, clarifying, and even classifying *interpretations*" (p. 75).

Rogers does not restrict his exploration of the validity of such a theory to the interpretation of Renaissance texts alone. His study considers the verse of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Dickinson, and Stevens as well as Spenser, Donne, Herbert, and Marvell. But his insistence upon reflexive interpretation is especially resonant in the case of the latter poets, given the interest in Renaissance

reflexivity initiated by Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, 1972). Rogers of course does not intend a consideration of genre-theory within the Renaissance (or within any other canonic period of the literary past). His study considers, and responds to, modern attacks upon the interpretive validity of the concept of genre. It avows that in spite of those attacks—or rather because of them—we must reconsider the meaning of genre, especially given the perpetual appearance of generic notions and terminology within interpretive discourse. Rogers engages us in an act of reclamation, an act reminiscent in spirit of Colie's resignification of genre-systems in relation to the functions of Renaissance literature in *The Resources of Kind* (Berkeley, 1973).

Rogers' project of reclamation is two-fold. In very specific ways, he attempts to preserve the concept of genre as a valuable critical model, addressing questions raised about the validity of broad genre-concepts by theoreticians like E. D. Hirsch and anatomizing Paul Hernadi's theory of "polycentric" genre—a theory of logical space which centers on the interpreter—as well as Hegel's and Staiger's theories of metaphysical principles, centered on the creator. But it is Croce's attack against genre-concepts, an attack directed against normative employment, which gives Rogers his crucial starting point. Rogers agrees that the concept of genre cannot be normative. The bases of Croce's attack—his insistence upon the distinction between intuitive and conceptual knowledge (analogous to the distinction between Art and Science) and his injunction (to be taken up by Wellek and the American New Critics) that any attempt to know art-objects through conceptual means is folly—raise problems central to Rogers' interpretive concerns. Such distinctions erect (or threaten to erect) an impasse in the formulation of a meaningful relation between a theory of genre and the literature which it is intended to illumine, but Rogers urges the incorporation of this Heideggerian distinction between the "knowledge of science" and the "understanding of human studies" within our concept of genre: it is precisely a genre-concept's status as a model within human studies which precludes its predictive function and assures its interpretive possibilities. The concept of the "hermeneutic circle" shared by Heidegger and Dilthey—the notion that "any interpretation which is to contribute understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (*Being and Time* [New York, 1962], p. 194)—underscores Rogers' assertions that (1) "the interpretive models for cultural

objects must always come from the realm of what is already understood in the objects themselves—namely, the realm of mind," and (2) "we understand the work by understanding the genre, and we understand genre by understanding the work" (p. 20).

Rogers recognizes that his assertions may be open to charges of vicious relativism, so his third chapter, "Standards of Interpretation and Evaluation," urges that a Heideggerian model may avoid subjectivity, if we build into that model a standard to which we may refer the interpretations yielded or produced. Rogers builds the possibility of "objectivity," of a logical demonstration of "correctness," within his model of interpretation. A correct interpretation becomes "an interpretation that has been found to conform in some way to some standard" (p. 122). Moving his concern with objectivity from standards of interpretation to standards of evaluation, Rogers posits three criteria: "the adequacy of the work to its subject matter" (p. 164), the capacity of the work to produce meaning (p. 170), and the recognition that the work's properties make it adaptable to many purposes (p. 173). The criteria cannot permit us to solve questions of value, but they can establish a program to follow in "attempting explicitly to set forth value-premises in accordance with our interpretive model" (p. 175).

In the careful argumentation of this central, third chapter we see Rogers most consciously justifying his construction of an interpretive model of genre and safeguarding that model from potential criticism and dismantling. Here, the bravest and most fundamental aspect of what we may call Rogers' project of reclamation comes to the fore as he attempts not merely to validate generic criticism, but to validate interpretive discourse in general in terms of a logical, philosophical model. He counters the structuralist challenge that we cannot have an adequate philosophical explanation of literary works until we have a philosophy of how language itself is possible by asserting the importance of understanding the interpretive act from which critical distinctions arise. This assertion jettisons his response to a similar challenge raised by the deconstructionists: namely, that the illusory nature of language precludes a validation of critical dialogue. According to Rogers, we have an interpretive alternative which may reconceive and surpass the Derridean assumption that there are only two gestures of interpretation: (1) "transcendent reading" or the attempt to recover the subject-matter (a reading inherently deficient in that the text, according to Derrida, never gives us the subject-matter in intuitive

presence) and (2) "deconstruction" of the text. The third alternative, one outlined and made manifest in *The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric*, articulates the relations of the work to our world.

This alternative determines Rogers' careful construction of his interpretive model. He establishes the three traditional genres as reflexive terms by associating each with one of Kant's open relational categories. Lyric becomes associated with "substance," drama with "causality," and epic with "community." In each case, the category accumulates meaning in relation to the experiential data which the act of interpretation tries to assimilate. Rogers builds two other Kantian terms within this model: "the mind of the work" and "the world of the work" (p. 57). Interpretation of a literary work is an interpretation of the relation between the entities of "mind" and "world" said to be "in" the work, though they result from the interpretive act itself (p. 48). Again, the open and even problematic nature of Kant's terms makes them suitable to the interpretive model.

Rogers addresses important problems in epistemology and pursues concerns regarding knowledge and understanding within the philosophical and aesthetic inquiry of our century. The range of theorists addressed (including Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Gadamer, and Derrida as well as Heidegger, Dilthey, and Hirsch) is impressive. The preeminence of objectivity and logic within Rogers' address is even more impressive. But Rogers turns from theory to practice in order to show that his model works. The test case is that of lyric, wherein to interpret a work as lyrical is to interpret the relation between mind and world in the work as one of community or reciprocity. Rogers admits that the readings of chapters two and four—"The Anomalous Voice and the Impersonal Lyric" and "Gestures Toward a Literary History of Lyric"—are largely traditional. Not necessarily his own, they often depend upon a received explication. Donne scholars will recognize the work of Gardner and Martz in Rogers' discussion of verbal wit in "Show me deare Christ." Rogers' purpose, however, is not to generate a radical reconception of Donne's sonnet, but to analyze the process by which previous readings have been generated, and in this aim his work helps us come to grips with how our critical discourse has been and continues to be shaped. Rogers' analysis of the dynamics of interpretation within his "Gesture Toward a Literary History of Lyric" offers a meaningful supplement to any number of studies. In the context of Donne, Douglas Peterson's *The English Lyric*

from Wyatt to Donne (Princeton, 1967) comes immediately to mind.]

The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric is an important book, assessing the issues central to critical discourse and squarely facing the threatened breaking of the hermeneutic circle. In spite of the abstract nature of its philological issues, it is also a readable book. There is a rhythm to it, a balanced movement between the formulation of theory and its application. Rogers' interpretive model evolves with measured care, and the author emerges within its development as the practicing "meta-critic." It should be noted that we gain more in following the evolution of Rogers' argument than any summary can possibly suggest. At the end of the book, Rogers cautions us that although he has offered a model of interpretation, he has not offered a program of reading:

> I hope that I have also sufficiently demonstrated why the model can never provide a program, a machine for the interpretation of literary works. Reciprocity between mind and world, as mediated by trope is a condition for the understanding of a work as lyric, and not primarily a heuristic concept to be used as a tool for prying out meanings. The greatest danger for this or any interpretive model is that it be taken as a means of producing understanding, instead of merely articulating it. (p. 270)

I hope that this review has reduced neither Rogers' model nor his discussion of theory to anything resembling the programmatic.

In *The Perception of Poetry*, Eugene Kintgen also addresses the question of authority as one of interpretive readership. He proposes a phenomenological view of the reading process, restricted to a specific kind of reading—"the kind academics undertake to discover information about a poem in preparation for presenting their knowledge to other academics" (p. ix). Kintgen's conception of this type of reading is considerably less complex than that of Rogers. Where Rogers aims "to ground genuine critical insights . . . in an explicitly articulated model of interpretation" (p. 270), a model he constructs himself, Kintgen pursues a more practical course. He analyzes the interpretive gestures of six graduate students within a model derived from information-processing theory. Kintgen borrows his model from Allen Newell and Herbert A. Simon's *Human Problem Solving* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972):

> a process model of individual behavior, nonstatistical, oriented toward discrete states of knowledge and the transitions between. It views man as an information processor with the ability to manipulate only a limited number of symbols at a given time, by means of a limited number of processes. (Kintgen, pp. 20-21)

The great bulk of Kintgen's book applies this process model to a number of tape-recorded readings of Shakespeare's Sonnet 94. Within the application, an inventory of elementary operations (Read, select, locate; Comment, narrate; Paraphrase; Deduce; etc.) is employed to chart the readers' processes. Kintgen's project is framed by a discussion of the evolution of reader-response criticism and a reassessment of the criticism in terms of the protocol analysis undertaken in his own study. The survey of the criticism seems unaccountably flat. Kintgen takes up Culler's emphasis upon the reading experience's adaptation of linguistic principles as well as Fish's and Dillon's stress upon the temporality of the experience to point out what are the obvious inconsistencies within each, and ends with a positive assessment of Holland's and Bleich's analyses of readers reading, but completely avoids a consideration of the deconstructionist challenge to the possibilities of understanding the production of meaning within the act of reading. Still, for the most part Kintgen does not hesitate to levy large attacks upon large concepts. He confidently asserts that "any language demands closure" (p. 180), and he does not fear to say that "both Culler's conventions and Fish's interpretive strategies are teleological and prescriptive, characterizing the goals of interpretation without providing much information about how to attain them" (p. 181). It is not clear that Kintgen safeguards his own model from such criticism.

Kintgen's study is ambitious; the motivations behind it, given the emphasis upon the reader within current discourse, seem importantly conceived. He questions what it means to read—to translate, transcribe, or somehow appropriate meaning from a prior text to an immediate context. But his study does not essay to consider such problems against those conflicts which valorize and problematize interpretation and authorization for Houston, Quint, and Rogers. Kintgen's book takes its cue from the exempla of the New Criticism, especially from the model of I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism*, but it thwarts the New Critics' insistence upon

the separateness of scientific analysis and aesthetic or literary evaluation. Kintgen also seems to ignore the very warning issued by Chomsky which he himself cites in relation to Culler's supposed inadequacies:

> For those who wish to apply the achievements of one discipline to the problems of another, it is important to make very clear the exact nature not only of what has been achieved, but equally important, the limitations of what has been achieved. (p. 11)

So conceived, *The Perception of Poetry* will perhaps be of greater interest to the readers of the *John Donne Journal* as a coda to the crucial efforts of Houston, Quint, and Rogers to articulate new aesthetic models and better understand the function of such models within contemporary and prior aesthetic discourse. Kintgen's retrospection (extraordinary in view of his apparent consideration of Bloomfield, Culler, and Fish, as well as others) may well confirm that we, like the authors whom we seek to understand, are perpetually tempted to succumb to that which is prior and paradigmatic in terms of meaning.

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