more conventional than Freer elsewhere shows Bassanes to be. Coherence, sincerity, plausibility, "depth" of character, and speech that arises from situation are the criteria Freer usually employs to match prosodic features with character and action, but he includes *Cymbeline* to show "how far it was possible to go in exploiting the gap between a character's poetry and that character's self-awareness, or between this gap and our own sense of the relations between the characters" (p. 209). Iachimo introduces a different model of character, and Freer's *bravura* reading of Iachimo's long concluding speeches finds him "the play's chief poetic ventriloquist" (p. 135), a character, as Richard Lanham would argue, without a "central self." Posthumus and Imogen develop, Iachimo does not, and his character as well as a certain amount of "archaism" and "an older rhetoric viewed through a refracting prism" (p. 126) frame and distance the play's action.

My review has not considered any examples of what the author might well claim as his major contribution, the patient and usually sensitive record of how the verse sounds and how it might affect us in each of these plays. Critics, teachers, and students of these plays will learn much from these analyses, but the careful study they deserve and reward cannot be undertaken in a review. Nor have Freer's many fine interpretations been fully noticed: the view that "Vindice is obsessed by his own *experience* of the court" (p. 64), for instance, or that Posthumus's "own consciousness of his failings and his distinct sense of being Imogen's inferior are attitudes he must shake, and by suspecting her of being unfaithful, that whole great weight can be canceled, that sense of perpetual obligation removed" (p. 113), or that "In the beginning Flamineo seems more a character of prose comedy than a verse-speaking tragic principal. Up to the trial scene he is close to being merely a stand-up comedian" (p. 138). Instead, I have sought to trace the argument's contours, and I find it to be a prosody of dramatic character, with all the difficulties that argument entails.

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Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays. Edited by C.A. Patrides. Columbia & London: The University of Missouri Press, 1982, Pp. 187.

Modern Scholarship on Sir Thomas Browne has tended to follow one of two traditions. The first seeks to establish Browne's credibility as a thinker, to remove any suspicion that he was not a serious and purposeful scientist. Its contributions include the great edition of Browne's works published by Sir Geoffrey Keynes (6 vols., London, 1928-31), which made available a critical text of his writings and correspondence; the essays of E. S. Merton, which evaluated Browne's experiments in plant reproduction, embryology, and digestion; the monographs of R. R. Cawley and George Yost (*Studies in Sir Thomas Browne* [Eugene, Oregon, 1965]), which underscored Browne's wide range of learning and his debt to Aristotle; and more recently, the edition of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* or "Vulgar Errors" published by Robin Robbins (2 vols., Oxford,

1981), which recreated the historic context of Browne's most ambitious work and defined the role Browne played in the scientific world of the late Renaissance. From these and other studies, we have come to understand better the purpose of Browne's investigations in such diverse fields as astronomy, mathematics, botany, zoology, physiology, mineralogy, chemistry, and of course, medicine. Browne, we now realize, was not a Baconian empiricist, much less a systematic philosopher, but a debunker of myth and a recorder of scientific discovery, an educator determined to clear away the residuum of fantastic learning though not able to resist the attraction that certain of its elements had for him.

The second and more familiar tradition of Browne scholarship focuses on Browne the writer, the author of *Religio Medici*, *Hydriotaphia*, *Urne-Burial*, *The Garden of Cyrus*, and miscellaneous works of literary interest. This tradition, which includes Johnson and Cowper in the eighteenth century, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, Melville, and Pater in the nineteenth century, and Morris Croll, E. R. Curtius, and Jorge Luis Borges among others in our own, celebrates Browne as a craftsman and metaphysical wit. It views Browne's worth as lying not only in his style, one of the most original and brilliant in the language, but in his imagination, his half-whimsical, half-inspired genius for drawing connections between disparate phenomena. In the words of Coleridge, we "wonder at and admire his entireness in every subject which is before him—he is *totus in illo*; he follows it; he never wanders from it,—and he has no occasion to wander;—for whatever happens to be his subject, he metamorphoses all nature into it."

This volume, which consists of fifteen lectures and essays commemorating the three hundredth anniversary of Browne's death in 1682, falls squarely within the second tradition. Its contributors are for the most part literary scholars and historians, with interests in politics, art, and religious culture. This is not to suggest that there is anything monotonous about the collection. The editor, C. A. Patrides, Professor of English Literature at the University of Michigan, has wisely refrained from imposing either theme or method on his colleagues, so that a variety of perspectives emerges. As in his earlier critical anthologies on Milton and Marvell, Patrides has arranged the essays "according to an order that coincidentally advances from general studies to particular ones."

Of the "general studies," two are especially worth noting, that by Patrides himself and that by Professor Frank Warnke of the University of Georgia. Patrides's essay focuses on what he calls Browne's "strategy of indirection," his use of irony and paradox to dramatize the complexity of truth. Patrides shows that like Erasmus, Browne distances himself from his "narrator." The result is a gravity "at once intensified and tempered by a playfulness assertive of a sympathetic response to the oddities of human behavior" (p. 47). For example, in a posthumous piece entitled *Museum Clausam*, or *Bibliotheca Abscondita*, a Rabelaisian catalogue of books, pictures, and rarities whose origins and whereabouts are dubious, Browne satirizes the mania for recondite objects that in his time was preoccupying many of the learned of Europe at the expense of true scientific research. A similar strategy is apparent in *Hydriotaphia*, which exposes the vanity and absurdity of man's quest for physical permanence even

as it discourses with vast erudition of the various burial customs of men throughout the ages. In these and other works, Browne balances the solemn and the joyful, the tragic and the comic in such a way as to contrast human folly with divine wisdom.

Frank Warnke's essay is a critique of Stanley Fish's now-famous reading of Browne in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (1972). Warnke rejects Fish's verdict that Browne must ultimately be deemed a "bad physician" because he does not challenge our assumptions or confront our values like Donne or Bacon or Milton. Warnke acknowledges that Browne dwells on the surface level of our consciousness, spellbinding us with the pyrotechnics of his verbal art. But this, according to Warnke, is not the evil that Fish makes it out to be. What Browne is concerned with is the immortality of the soul and its relation to the deity, the paradoxical and mysterious world of being. This he accomplishes, explains Warnke, by means of an indirect method that "liberates us into the aesthetic" (p. 59). For Browne, it is not the matter of the sentence that counts, but the manner or *experience* of the sentence. Attention is focused not on the meaning communicated, but on a stylistic virtuosity that convulses and thrills the imagination, shocking the mind out of common ratiocinative modes of thinking and awakening in it a sense of wonder at the extremes of human experience. Like the architectural feats of Bernini or the paintings of El Greco, Browne's prose stupefies its audience, dazzles them with a power they can only interpret as divine. Is such art good for us, Warnke asks? The answer, he submits, is yes, if we can move beyond the puritanical attitudes that continue to encumber our appreciation of literature and especially the baroque.

The essays in the volume treating of particular problems and individual works within the Browne canon are without exception stimulating, and what is unfortunately too rare in literary criticism today, readable. It is impossible to discuss all of them here, but a few might be mentioned in passing. Murray Roston presents the thesis that Browne's style was not, as Croll and others have argued, expressive of the searching, tortuous mentality of the baroque movement, with its doubts concerning the possibility of knowledge, but rather emblematic of a more resolved sensibility, of the "achieved equilibrium of spirit" associated with classical art and with rationalistic writers like Dryden. D. W. Jefferson also notes Browne's "philosophical repose," explaining it, however, not as an individual phenomenon but as part of the larger social movement that found relief from the turmoil of the English civil war in the cultivation of the intellect and in the development of professional interests. Raymond Waddington and Michael Wilding adopt a different view of Browne. Writing on the *Religio Medici*, they see him as a more politically charged writer, mounting a subtle but deliberate defence of Anglican principles and institutions against Puritan "innovation." John R. Knott, Jr., and Frank L. Huntley both write on *The Garden of Cyrus*, the former considering Browne's fascination with the figure of the labyrinth as suggestive of an admiration for the divine creation and of a self-conscious recognition of man's capacity for error, the latter illuminating an aspect of Browne that has hitherto gone undetected (or at any rate unexplored)—his prophetic and millenarian anticipation of the end of history and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. These critics have opened up what has

proved to be Browne's most hermetic work, casting new light on Browne's use of symbol, allegory, hieroglyph, typology, and numerology. The last essay to be noted is that of Marie Boas Hall, who brings a wealth of historical knowledge to bear on Browne's connections with the scientific community of the seventeenth century. Professor Hall's essay adds immeasurably to the value of the volume, as it clarifies the nature of Browne's approach to scientific problems. Hall shows how, although Browne was a careful recorder of observed fact, he never lost his humanist love of authority and of books; how, although his studies brought him into close contact with the College of Physicians and the Royal Society, he remained apart from the new science of the century, which tended to divorce its aims from those of religion. It was for these reasons that he was indifferent to or unable to grasp the significance of certain scientific breakthroughs, such as Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood or Copernicus's model of the solar system (he remained an adherent of the Ptolemaic astronomy throughout his career). According to Hall, Browne is best described as a "naturalist," an historian of natural and cultural facts, passing his informed judgment on all that came within his ken, but doing little to further theoretical understanding.

Given the richness of the essays here collected, it will seem a little unreasonable to complain of omissions, but two areas might have been addressed with profit. First, Browne's philology. Though not of the rank of a Scaliger or a Bentley, Browne was a respectable grammarian and scholar. In addition to his mastery of classical and modern European languages, he was a forerunner of comparative linguistics, as his fragment "Of Languages, and particularly of the Saxon Tongue," and certain passages of the *Pseudodoxia* attest. He was especially intrigued by the origin of language, noting the effects of natural, technological, and historical events on its development. An inquiry into the extent of his research in this area would contribute greatly to an understanding of his humanism, as well as provide us with insights into the sources of his diction.

The other area is biography. No effort has been made to provide any new perspective on Browne himself. Although it is widely agreed that a large measure of the interest Browne's writings have for us derives from his personality ("a fine mixture of the humourist, genius, and pedant," as Coleridge put it), little attention has been paid to Browne the man. One regrets the absence of a biographical essay reflecting the historic scholarship of this century. Much could be said of Browne's humanist education at Montpellier, Padua, and Leiden; of his friendships with Henry Power, John Evelyn, Nicolas Bacon, William Dugdale, and other distinguished scholars; and of his credulity, which had, at least on one occasion (the 1664 witchcraft trial of Amy Duny and Rose Cullender), most unfortunate consequences.

Aside from these caveats, however, *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne* is a balanced and judicious volume. Certainly in terms of addressing the critical issues and concerns of contemporary literary scholarship on Browne it is unparalleled. Professor Patrides and his colleagues have done a splendid job in putting before us a classic of English literature, and in showing us new ways to appreciate his achievement.

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