section are related to and strengthen the structure of the poem and the configuration of image. As in his earlier discussions, especially that of *Comus*, nature and grace at times afford a stimulating underpinning for Woodhouse's remarks—but no reviewer can really suggest the rich variety of both learning and artistic sensitivity that this chapter, particularly though not uniquely in the book, leans upon in its progress. As the critic goes through the text, the sub-theme of each section is shown in control, for its moment of the poem, of Milton's delicately evolving world of structure, image, and prosodic amplification of idea. The reader may long for more development of Woodhouse's suggestion that the patterns of verse that emerge from this interaction, especially those of tone and rhythm, in some degree compensate for the lack of stanza and rhyme as organizational elements in *Paradise Lost*. It is, however, the reaction, perhaps, of a glutton, since what Woodhouse has offered is one of the most helpfully provocative and inclusive guides to Milton's epic and its roots in literary, intellectual, and religious tradition, just as the concluding chapters will do, though on a suitably more limited scale, for *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.

One may, of course, have a momentary objection in spots, though it is soon dimmed by the light of what is being accomplished. The seams transforming individual pieces into a book would doubtless have been less apparent in places, had Woodhouse lived, though even as they stand they are no seriously distracting factor. And it seems rather rigid to assert, as Woodhouse does, that Dalila cannot be based on Mary Powell, since Milton's fault as a husband was not that of uxoriousness: surely, at least in art, all parts of an equation do not have to be true in order for one element to be so. My own feeling is that Milton's catastrophic first marriage hovers frequently over Dalila, though the poet's depiction of both her and Samson must of course respond independently to many non-autobiographical pressures as well.

As is true of all great works of criticism (and this is surely part of that select company), the excellence of *The Heavenly Muse* extends beyond its particular subject matter and what it has to say about it: the best critics always have an implicit lesson to provide, by way of example, about the art of criticism itself, its methods and its possibilities. In this book, we "simply" go through the texts and pause to notice salient qualities and interactions of parts. The dimension of time in literature, the fact that a poem or a piece of prose has both beginning and end, and that each point along the way is given its nature and its force partly by its relationship to the points that have come before and those that will come after: this, one feels, is the basic and truthful road. To go along it with Woodhouse is to be misled, of course, since he makes it all seem so effortless, so natural a part of perception itself, this ability to fuse past, present, and future, both within a work and extending from the work to the spiritual and intellectual treasures of mankind. Yet how much we learn in the process, not only about Milton, but about the nature of art at its very core.

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Martin Fleisher. *Radical Reform and Political Persuasion in the Life and Writings of Thomas More*. (*Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance CXXXII*). Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1973. Pp. 183.

For Thomas More, Christian humanism was a calling, says the author of this book, a calling that fused divine mission and practical activity, giving to the activity of, for instance, writing, telling a fable, counselling, the urgency of being a response to the divine sending forth. The introductory chapter to *Radical Reform* . . . puts the case strongly for More's conviction that the ideal Christian, the supremely godly man, has an obligation to the society in which he lives; and, specifically in sixteenth-century Europe, that obligation involves him in the reform and re-education of a whole people. The author goes further and presents the corollary: he sees More as sympathizing wholeheartedly in Erasmus' rejection of any monastic leanings as ideal or even intrinsically valuable as a way of life; and some readers may boggle at this, for even Erasmus denied having impugned the worth of the monk's life in its pristine integrity, and More is not usually thought of as totally anti-monk or even totally pro-Erasmus. These opening pages lay the groundwork too for a later chapter which presents the reader with Thomas More as a person, a man for all seasons, one whose sanctity easily embraces "a lively sense of pleasure and a healthy affection for the things of the world"—no fugitive or cloistered virtue his; and with this all will surely agree. It is then as a Christian humanist, activated by a sense of mission and a desire to serve his Creator through service to his fellow men, that More wrote his *Utopia*, advancing a reform radical in the extreme—the abolishing of private ownership in the interest of human felicity and justice. Fleisher's appreciation of *Utopia* and the other works of Thomas More never loses sight of the motivating force behind them.

From Bridgett and Chambers to Hexter and Surtz, Morean scholars have proffered a variety of conjecture about More's personal stance concerning the Utopian way of life. Some think he presents *Utopia* as the ideal state, the closest approximation to a *civitas Dei* possible in this life; others see it presented as not quite ideal but surely occupying a happy middle position between the sorry Christian world as it really is and the ideal Christendom; and some think its wily author has cunningly veiled some large hints that this way of life, more rational than humane, is neither workable nor desirable. Professor Fleisher sees no *double-entendre* in the work: he defends More's commitment to the country Hythlodaye describes with its daring vision of radical socialism—perhaps improbable, perhaps unattainable, but workable and admirable if only selfish man could be educated to seeing its philosophy as uniquely conducive to his happiness and fullness of being. Fleisher sees More's conviction in terms of his humanism and religious devotion, for the just and equal distribution of things will abolish, along with private ownings, the ungodly vices of greed, envy, and above all, *superbia*, that prime stuff of Hell. It is the only principle, he insists, "in agreement with the commands of God. . . ." And a footnote here comments that the later More is still of this mind, seeing private property as having "no sanction in scripture or natural reason, but only emerging from usage and consent."¹ Indeed Fleisher even sees a strong corroborative to More's repudiation of private property in his admiration for universal virtues and his small regard for private religious observances, for "the private or particular interest is the ultimate enemy to peace and unity."

The problem then is to persuade or educate man to accept the radical reform More would propose; and the rhetorical method of *Utopia* was thus not born of impulse or whimsy. Neither Erasmus nor More was willing to create faction or upset existing order or authority,² and, therefore, they sought to effect their reformatory ends through the medium to which they were trained—*bonae litterae*. Within the area of letters there was choice to be made too: More had small confidence in abstract or over-intellectual reason-

ing, but the right kind of rhetoric can "absorb philosophy and science and present itself as the true handmaiden of ethics and theology," and, of course of institutional reform. *Utopia* is a fable, a work using dialogue and imagination, rather than dialectic and lifeless logic, in the interest of bettering man and his world. More has Hythlodaye tell of people who share all things and are happy, full of *industria* and *studium* (to which their way of life is conducive) and who live within the embrace of *caritas*.

The Utopian pleasure principle, which has provoked many a long discussion, does not disturb Fleisher. More's God, he asserts, is not the *Deus absconditus* of Pascal, but one close to the human condition, delighting in man and his interests, constantly creating pleasant things and meaning his best creature to delight in them and be happy. The inquiry into human happiness "begins with the principle given by natural religion," and thus, for a Utopian to pursue hard or painful virtue or to suffer pain unnecessarily is absurd. Stoic reason is thus called into question; yet reason itself is not downplayed. Reason, as More sees it, says Fleisher, "does more than discern what is right: it inflames us with a passion for it," and passion and pleasure are the perquisites of reason.

The chapters on rhetoric rely greatly on More's letter to Dorp, who had criticized Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, but make frequent and apt use of other writings too. Dr. Fleisher's paragraphs are always well informed about the European scene and its scholars and churchmen and statesmen, and about the position of the Christian humanist in the midst of alarms and excursions. The discussion, for instance of the distinctions between logic and rhetoric, between dialectic and dialogue, might be earmarked for further study, and indeed much of the book provides country for scholarly revisiting.

Two digressions are worth noting. New modes of scriptural exegesis are ably summarized and the summaries will be helps to further study; and a very idealistic picture of Erasmus as the mouthpiece and exemplar of Christian charity may provoke sweet wonder among some Erasmians.

On the whole, this chapter and the next make a strong case for More's repudiation of all things medieval. And here, it seems to me, the author is running a risk of building up in his reader a bit of "sales resistance" to at least some of the insistent generalizations. This reader, for instance, is moved, if not to dissent, at least to suspended judgment about some of Fleisher's convictions: for instance, that More wholeheartedly supports the Utopian economy, that he wholly disparages medieval education and the speculative sciences, that he sees preaching as standing higher (in the Church's priorities) than the dispensing of the sacraments—though, of course, this would be true of Erasmus—that he presents Hythlodaye as the "very model of a model Christian humanist," and, finally, that More and Erasmus can be anchored so firmly into the "fools-for-Christ's-sake" tradition, a point made in the final chapter. Erasmus could be very calculating at times, we remember, and More was a shrewd lawyer.

The author sees *Utopia* as greatly surpassing the polemical works in value; these latter he finds "voluminous, tedious, and repetitive." No one knew better than More, he says, that harsh words are rarely persuasive, and there is evidence that in later years More regretted the severity of his writings against Tyndale. *The Dialogue of Comfort* was written, as was *Utopia*, to help others towards the joy and peace that was so difficult then to sustain.

Fleisher's book is a book for scholars. Whether or not one shares all his convictions, one cannot but admire his forthrightness, his erudition, and his lucid expositions of the

thought and activities of the age of Thomas More.

Notes

- 1 *Radical Reform*, p. 42, footnote 93; the passage from which Fleisher derives his information is from the *Responsio ad Convitia Martini Lutheri* in More's *Omnia Opera*, Louvain, 1565, p. 80.
- 2 More's ultimate refusal to obey the king was, Fleisher thinks, a matter of priorities, and does not bely his position as one reluctant to contravene authority.

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William Blissett, Julian Patrick, R.W. Van Fossen, editors. *A Celebration of Ben Jonson*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973. Pp. xiii, 194. \$8.50.

This handsome little volume is a gathering of six papers presented at the 1972 Toronto conference marking the 400th anniversary of Jonson's birth. The names of the authors guarantee their professional excellence. In addition to the six printed here, the conference heard a number of other papers which we can find in various journals. Introduced by Professor William Blissett, who had the chief responsibility for this book, the volume concludes with a listing of members of the conference. The University of Toronto, which sponsored this celebration, is to be commended for the style with which it manages such things; and we who were not there can only regret our absence.

The essays begin with a provocative piece on "The Incredibility of Jonsonian Comedy." In it Clifford Leech notes that for all their firmly didactic purpose and realistic trappings, the careful craftsmanship of the plays—their "narrow restriction of time and place" and characterization which "stretches our capacity for belief" (p. 21)—leads us to admire rascals and compels us to believe the unbelievable. He calls our attention to a central paradox of Jonsonian comedy which is "inherent in the 'mainstream' of comedy" itself (p. 22). Jonson "loved to play tricks" (p. 7), for he "belongs in the theatre" (p. 24). The comedy is "outrageous" because it "simultaneously demands and defies belief" (p. 23), proclaims high moral purpose and celebrates scoundrels, all within the deliberate artificiality of the stage. Jonson's craft is so great that he makes us accept the unacceptable.

In the second essay, Jonas A. Barish discusses "Jonson and the Loathed Stage." He writes, "it is hard not to feel, at times, that Jonson's vocation [as dramatist] goes against the grain" (p. 27); and that Jonson frequently thinks of his plays as "reading experience rather than a theatrical experience" (p. 33). Apparently Jonson really wanted another line of work—though he is of course not the only master to complain about the hard terms of his craft. In this essay Barish is in danger of pouring out the baby with the bathwater. To see the most skillful manipulator of plot in English drama as essentially "anti-theatrical" is to define "theatrical" in a sophisticated, if not sophistical, fashion. One's common sense is challenged. Jonson assuredly distrusts "theatricality, particularly as it manifests itself in acting, miming, or changing" (p. 49) outside the theatre—for perfectly obvious moral reasons. But within the theatre, these are the qualities on which he places his dramaturgical reliance. Like Leech's preceding essay, this one is based on paradox. Its paradox is the kind with which academics love to play.

In the third essay, by G.R. Hibbard, "Ben Jonson and Human Nature," we are asked