31 October 1970. There are six essays: on Erasmus, by John B. Payne; on Calvinist psalmody by W. Stanford Reid; on Pierre Viret, by Robert D. Linder; on liturgical reform among the Irenicists, by John P. Dolan; on Marpeck and Butzer, by Donald J. Ziegler; and on Cranmer, by John P. Forman. Copies may be ordered from The Foundation for Reformation Research, 6477 San Bonita Avenue, Saint Louis, Missouri 63105.

R. W. VAN FOSSEN, *University of Toronto*

J. W. Lever. *The Tragedy of State*. London: Methuen, 1971. Pp. ix, 100. \$7.95 cloth; \$3.65 paper.

In this series of lectures Professor Level considers a number of Jacobean tragedies for their concern with the "phenomenon of state." Arguing for the "relevance" of the plays to the political realities of the early seventeenth century, he dismisses as outmoded the concepts of providential order that comprise a supposed Elizabethan World Order. The old formulas were inadequate to account for what thinkers of independent mind viewed as the patternless flux of human affairs or to justify tyrannies dedicated to power for its own sake, fostered by the decadence of the old nobility, and maintained by policy. The preoccupation of Jacobean dramatists with the corruption of the political order deeply affected their expression of the tragic forms they had inherited.

Lever distinguishes three principal versions of the tragedy of state. Into the Kydian revenge play the Jacobean brings a new level of intellectual speculation, strengthened by both satire and aphoristic moralizing, that emphasizes the evil of statism and the debasement of human values under corrupt rule. The heroic play, which has its Elizabethan model in Marlowe's treatment of aspiring supermen, sets its heroes against the unconquerable machinations of policy rather than against the limits of mortality. The Roman play, like its antecedent, the English history play, deals directly with politics, but it replaces the earlier faith in providence by a pessimistic sense of the incurable depravity of power. These relatively distinct forms merge towards the end of the Jacobean period in Webster's great tragedies. *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi* have their most obvious affinities with the revenge play; but the first conveys a Jonsonian sense of corruption as "a universal phenomenon, the ambience of an entire civilization," and the second presents a Chapman-like focus upon the heroic struggle of the individual.

Lever's approach yields generally satisfying accounts of the plays he discusses. One feels that there is in much tragic writing after 1600 a narrowing of compass, a reduction in the scope which imagination conceives as the context of tragic experience. Heroism is mocked - tragically mocked - by the dispiriting persuasion that man's desire for heroic assertion is opposed by forces that are petty as well as invincible. Lever's direction is altogether right when he speaks of Jacobean tragedy as "a drama of adversity and stance, not of character and destiny."

By insisting upon the innovations of the Jacobean the author, as he points out, goes against the tendency in recent scholarship to stress the continuity of English Renaissance drama. Lever's forensic strategy in urging his position by no means leads to general excess,

but it does produce emphases that are on occasion overstated or pressed too narrowly, as in the claims for "relevance." In the Italy of *The White Devil* English audiences no doubt saw much that struck home; but such appositeness does not necessarily become itself the subject of the play. To find that *The White Devil* is concerned with "the overriding theme of a corrupt society" confuses context with matter. The effect of the play's relevance is to make credible its moral relativity by reminding spectators of the nearby corroborative evidence. Moreover, the notorious ambivalence of Webster's tragedy gains force by the play's formal relation to a tradition that from its inception deals uneasily with the absolutes of virtue, duty, and death. Lever properly opposes the concept of a Jacobean drama "where tragedy sat for ever re-enacting man's primeval fall"; yet for all its originality Jacobean drama does not lose the resonance created by an Elizabethan awareness of model and archetype, even though that awareness came increasingly to bear ironically.

The Tragedy of State has a pleasing style graced by many exact touches, as in the description of Chapman's Cato facing the after-life "in the spirit of a Dantesque Ulysses." The book, however, suffers from its accommodation to an audience of "students without a highly detailed knowledge of Jacobean drama." The necessity to provide summaries of the plays (of which three at most might be thought obscure) mars the work. One wishes it had been possible for Professor Lever to insist that his listeners do their homework before attending.

GUY HAMEL, *University of Toronto*

Richard Levin. *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971. Pp. 277.

During the last decade Professor Richard Levin has published a baker's dozen of articles on the construction of English Renaissance drama. Now these articles have been augmented by considerations of other plays, grouped in a careful schema of varieties of multiple plot drama that centers on about thirty exemplary analyses, framed by two "theoretical" chapters, and given both an appendix on the double plot in Roman comedy and a useful bibliography. The result is *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama*.

In the first chapter, "The Unity of Multiple-Plot Drama," we are given a survey of opinion which insists perhaps too strongly – (one recalls Yeats' little essay on "Emotion of Multitude," for example), on the apparent prejudice against secondary plots in critical writing before the 1940s, and then goes on to state the aim of the book: "a systematic treatment of the subject [by supplying] the necessary framework for gathering together and assimilating this scattered material" resulting from the newer, more accepting attitude toward multiple plots. The chapter continues with a listing of the varieties of connection among characters from different plots: connection through conventional relationships (neighbours, kinsmen), and common settings (fairs); through causal relationship (aggressor-victim); and through formal relationships (analogous functions in different plots). Over these categories hovers the presiding idea of Aristotle's "four causes," which also provides another kind of connection – an "affective relationship between plots ... corresponding to Aristotle's final cause." A last paragraph, however, suddenly abandons this schema for an