

and our knowledge that they are not identical. One might say that every poem shows some sign of a rivalry between Ariel and Prospero; in every good poem their relationship is more or less happy, but it is never without its tensions. The Grecian Urn states Ariel's position; Prospero's has been equally succinctly stated by Dr Johnson: *The only end of writing is to enable the readers better to enjoy life or better to endure it.*

Alongside Mr Auden's warmth, enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity, originality, wit and scholarship, goes his passionate belief in the importance, power and value of poetry. The whole of *The Dyer's Hand* is alive with this belief, and it is wonderfully infectious. This is a book which will not only enliven the depressed moods of poets today, but also instruct readers of poetry in the intimate, though not always clearly evident, relationship between art and life.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

THE FREE SPIRIT, by C. B. Cox; Oxford University Press; 25s.

This book is, in the words of its sub-title, 'A Study of liberal humanism in the novels of George Eliot, Henry James, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf and Angus Wilson'. Mr Cox is a critic of great intelligence and perception, but, though his book is well worth reading for the questions it raises, and for its incidental *aperçus*, it is unsatisfactory as a whole. At the risk of appearing unappreciative of the book's merits, I wish to devote most of the space at my disposal to explaining why I found it unsatisfactory, as it seems to illustrate very interestingly the kind of temptations to which the Christian literary critic is perhaps especially vulnerable.

All 'thematic' criticism of fiction is open to attack because it is concerned with artefacts, but selects, arranges and evaluates them within a non-aesthetic scheme—in this case the values and attitudes of liberal humanism. Of course, this objection is itself crudely oversimplified. Fiction is not 'pure form'; it has manifold and intricate relations with life, and the critic cannot ultimately dissociate his response to a novel from his own 'philosophy of life'. But it seems to me that the critic has a duty to discipline his own preconceptions as far as possible, and that he is less likely to err by submitting himself to the formal effects of a work of literature than by abstracting from it certain patterns of behaviour and evaluating them in the same way that he evaluates actual human behaviour.

Novels certainly contain 'ideas', and have a place in the history of ideas. But novels—at least those Mr Cox discusses—are not primarily vehicles of ideas, but of a total response to life, life as perceived by the novelist. Thus an ideological reading of James, Forster and the rest makes them all seem very similar, but a literary reading of them impresses one with the uniqueness of each.

Perhaps I can best illustrate my uneasiness about Mr Cox's approach by quoting from his last chapter:

The free spirits are people of fine courage and honour, caring deeply for individual liberty and responding sensitively to particular situations. Their anti-dogmatism and their passion for justice have had an important and healthy influence on our national life. In the struggle for women's rights or racial equality, liberal thought has often been far superior to that of orthodox, conservative Christianity; yet my analysis of characters with liberal sympathies has shown how their values very often make them unable to control events. I come upon the word 'characters' with a certain shock, for the preceding discourse is of a kind that belongs to historical, or political or sociological writing, not to literary criticism. Characters are not autonomous individuals with wills of their own. Whether they control or fail to control events is entirely up to their creator. When actual liberals fail to control events this may indicate a weakness in liberal humanism. And when fictional liberals fail to control events this may indicate the novelist's admission of a weakness in liberal humanism. But, in the latter case, the failure has no necessary correlation with the success or failure of the *novel*.

Mr Cox admits, *à propos* of *The Portrait of a Lady*, that many great works express a tension which the author himself cannot resolve. This is indeed true, and one might go further and say that without such unresolved tensions many works of literature which we treasure would not have been written at all. But the general tenor of Mr Cox's book is to suggest that the novelists he discusses, good as they are, would have been better novelists if they hadn't been liberal humanists. 'I shall argue,' he says at the outset, 'that the liberal emphasis on motives and consequences has led to sterility.' I find the charge unproven because it is, in literary terms, unprovable.

DAVID LODGE

TWO FRIENDS: JOHN GRAY AND ANDRE RAFFALOVICH, edited by Fr Brocard Sewell; St Albert's Press; 3 gns.

This pleasantly produced, expensively priced, limited edition of 450 copies, presents a collection of essays of which several have already appeared elsewhere and which many will think scarcely deserve so elaborate a presentation. They are in the main contributions to a legend, although the editor's *Biographical Outline* and Mr Iain Fletcher's critical essay on *The Poetry of John Gray* are both more severely realistic and critical. Gray and Raffalovich were selective in what they chose to leave to posterity, and it is very doubtful if a thorough biographical study of either could now be achieved, even if it were thought desirable. Some corrections of fact should be noted. There is no collection of unpublished Gray Mss 'in that tantalizing safe in the Dominican house at Edinburgh'. (The safe is as phantastic as much else in the story.) There is documentary evidence—though not in Edinburgh—which contradicts the tale of Raffalovich's aversion to the Dominican church in Pendleton. The friends were not the founders of the Dominican priory in Edinburgh—they disapproved apparently of university