

pture. Mais l'auteur ne semble pas s'en être rendu compte. Quant à la méthode: «L'essai littéraire est éclectique. Il présente une succession d'unités hétérogènes, reliées par un fil parfois ténu. L'essayiste procède par reprises et retouches; c'est cette méthode qui fait l'originalité du genre» (p. 97). L'essai a une place bien distincte, selon l'auteur:

«L'essai se trouve [...] entre la littérature et la philosophie: l'essayiste s'engage comme l'écrivain, et comme le philosophe, il croit atteindre une réalité objective; son discours signifie la littérature, même s'il semble coïncider avec le référent. L'étude génologique de l'essai littéraire tiendra compte de ces tentatives de produire un sens logique supprimant l'hiatus entre le signe et l'objet désigné» (p. 7).

Voichița Sasu, Cluj-Napoca,
Roumanie

Lily B. Campbell, SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES — MIRRORS OF ELIZABETHAN POLICY, ed. 3, Methuen and Co. Ltd, London (1977), ss. 346.

When the First Folio collection of Shakespeare's plays was published in 1623 it was classified as comedies, tragedies, and histories. Thus, for the first time a history play was recognized as a dramatic genre. It was a genre that grew in popularity during the last half of the 16th century in England and it was as different from tragedy and comedy as they were from each other.

Lily B. Campbell believes that "history plays will better be understood when we stop talking about them in terms of the ancient classical dramatic genres and consider them in relation to general principles of historical and non-dramatic literature" (p. 1).

Shakespeare's Histories—Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy is therefore directed to discovering the principles and methods of historiography which were current in 16th-century England and to demonstrate the way in which Shakespeare applied them when he wrote his histories.

It consists of two parts—the first one "History, Historiography and Politics"—and the second one—"Shakespeare's Political Use of History".

The first part embraces ten chapters: "The Point of View", "What Are Histories",

"The Humanistic Revival of History", "Classical Rhetoric and History", "Renaissance Conceptions of History", "History and the Reformation", "The Influence of Continental Theories in England", "English History in the Sixteenth Century", "History Versus Poetry in Renaissance England", "Poetical Mirrors of History". Lily B. Campbell rejects the view that "a poet exists in vacuum, or even that he exists solely in the minds and hearts of his interpreters" (p. 6). She believes that Shakespeare can only be understood against the background of his own time as his own ideas and experience have been conditioned by the time and place in which he lived.

Thus, the first part of this book shows that in the history plays there is a dominant political pattern characteristic of political philosophy of his age. Especially interesting are the chapters on the definition of history plays and the relation between policy and history plays in the age of Shakespeare.

The problem of history plays has been opened for discussion since the edition of the First Folio, as the first editors Heminges and Condell did not differentiate them from tragedies on the basis of the sources from which they derived. The plays listed as histories have their sources in the chronicles as *King Lear* and *Macbeth* among tragedies, and *Cymbeline* among comedies. Moreover, most of the Shakespearean tragedies were, indeed, drawn from accepted historical sources. The answer to the question what differentiated the chosen ten in the thinking of Shakespeare's first editors is still vague. Many scholars have tried to find the definition of Shakespeare's histories. Lily B. Campbell presents us with a vast survey of almost all literary concepts on this kind of genre including such headlights of criticism as William Coleridge, Professor Schelling, August William Schlegel and Professor W. D. Ross.

Coleridge, for example, seeing that the ten plays are related to the history of England and taking into account the fact that the history play should be regarded as "the transitional link between the epic poem and the drama" (p. 9) framed the following definition: "In order that a drama may be properly historical, it is necessary that it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed..."

It takes, therefore, that part of real history which is least known, and infuses a principle of life and organization into the naked facts, and makes them all the framework of an animated whole" (p. 9).

Professor Scheling recognized that the history play was more closely affiliated with historical literature than with other varieties of drama. He recognized two groups of history plays: those centerring about history and historical personages and those dealing with legendary history, or at least involving a more or less conscious derivation from history.

August William Schlegel said that they as a series furnish "examples of the political course of the world applicable to all times" (p. 11).

Miss Lily B. Campbell thinks that what Professor W. D. Ross said of Aristotle could be equally well said of Shakespeare: "he does not forget in the *Ethics* that the individual man is essentially a member of society, nor in the *Politics* that the good life of the state exists only in the good lives of its citizens" (p. 16). She believes that the distinction between tragedy and comedy is simply the distinction between private and public moral. "Tragedy is concerned with the doings of men which in philosophy is discussed under *Ethics*; history with doings of men which in philosophy are discussed under *Politics*" (p. 17).

It is interesting to compare her viewpoint with those of Clifford Leech and L. C. Knights. In his book *Shakespeare—The Chronicles* Clifford Leech defines historical plays as political ones on "subjects drawn from recent to Shakespeare history of England where society was a part of the cosmic order with its parallel and corresponding planes of being so that disorder at one level was echoed in the others."¹

L. C. Knights raises an even more interesting point, saying that "historical plays are concerned with open-textured historical writing, the kind of drama in which there is not a persistent consciousness of an ineluctable march of events."² To underline the "open-textured" character of historical writing in this group of plays L. C. Knights included *The Merry*

Wives of Windsor into his essay on *Shakespeare—The Histories*.

Coming back to Lily B. Campbell's book we should stress the importance of chapter X "Poetical Mirrors of History," which serves as an explanation of the title of the book. Anyone studying Tudor times is aware of the tremendous popularity of the words "mirror"; "glass"; "speculum" and "image" as titles of literary works. There were mirrors of good manners, of policy, of friendship, mirrors for soldiers, magistrates, and others. But the mirrors of these titles were not merely looking glasses in which Everyman might grow familiar with his own image. The exact significance of the term seems to have been associated with Plato's interpretation: "In some way or other, which he [Plato] never succeeded in explaining, this world of particular things arises by reflection, as it might be, from the supervision of ideas upon an originally indeterminate or undifferentiated medium, which is to Plato hardly more than a place or locus as it were the visionary depth of a mirror or other featureless receptacle" (p. 107).

The "mirrors" were thus works dedicated to the task of expounding the present by reference to the past, using history to teach the political lessons which its authors reckoned most pertinent to the understanding of political events in their own days.

Moreover, their purpose was to teach a lesson. Tudor England should be taught by history, the political lessons concerning ruling or being ruled, concerning the duties of judges and counsellors and subjects and kings which were important for the welfare of the state and the people. Shakespeare's history plays, by mirroring the present in the past, give us this lesson.

Lily B. Campbell stresses the need for studying history plays as a genre separate from tragedy and comedy. They should be studied as a form of art carefully selected and their subject matter used for the purposes universally accepted as appropriate.

It is then to the consideration of Shakespeare's historical plays as serving these recognized purposes of history that Lily B. Campbell is devoting the second part of this book. It consists of six chapters—"Shakespeare's History Plays"; "The Troublesome Reign of King John"; "The Unquiet Time of Henry

¹ C. Leech, *Shakespeare: The Chronicles*, London 1962, p. 11.

² L. C. Knights, *Shakespeare: The Histories*, London 1962, p. 12.

IV"; "The Victorious Acts of King Henry V"; "The Tragical Doings of King Richard III".

While analyzing the respective plays it is underlined that each of the Shakespeare's histories serves a special purpose in elucidating a political problem of Elizabeth's day, and in bringing it to bear upon this problem the accepted political philosophy of the Tudors.

Lily B. Campbell raises two points in particular. First, that Shakespeare chose for his histories kings who had already been accepted as archetypes and who had been used over and over again to point out particular morals. Secondly, Shakespeare carefully chose incidents and characters from history and altered the historical situation and facts to suit the current political situation and facts which he had in mind. Under this practice there is the assumption that history can be utilized to explain the present. But it does not repeat itself in every detail and while the larger outlines of historical facts must be preserved to be convincing, the details are often altered to make the past more reminiscent of the present.

The fact that Miss Lily B. Campbell has stressed the traditional nature of Shakespeare's interpretations and the effect of contemporary political situations upon the selection and alteration of historical facts in the plays makes *Shakespeare's Histories—Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* worth reading for any student of Shakespeare.

Krystyna Kujawińska-Courtney, Łódź

R. Alter, *PARTIAL MAGIC. THE NOVEL AS A SELF-CONSCIOUS GENRE*. University of California Press, Berkeley—Los Angeles—London 1975, ss. 248.

Powieściowa samoświadomość własnej egzystencji i zorganizowania dopiero stosunkowo niedawno zyskała u nas terminologiczną autonomię. Jej ogólna definicja słownikowa („autotematyzm”) i bardziej szczegółowe, alternatywne czy komplementarne określenia („powieść jako metodologia powieści”, „powieść warsztatowa”) chyba nie oddają jednak w pełni całej złożoności zjawiska. Również i aparat krytyczny literatury anglosaskiej nie wypracował w tym zakresie jednolitego i ścisłego nazewnictwa. Obecnie stosuje się bowiem takie terminy, jak

„authorial novel”, „self-reflective novel”, „self-reflexive novel”, „metafiction”, wreszcie „self-consciousness”. Mnogość ta jest naturalnym wykładnikiem braku dogłębnych studiów nad niniejszą problematyką. Poprawy tej sytuacji podjął się Robert Alter w swojej pracy *Partial Magic. The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*. Składa się ona ze wstępu, siedmiu rozdziałów oraz indeksu nazwisk. Autor poddaje w niej bardziej lub mniej szczegółowej analizie kilkanaście utworów prozatorskich, by, jak zapowiada, wskazać na: 1) sprzeczności literackiego realizmu, 2) rolę autotematyzmu w rozwoju geneologicznym powieści.

Źródło omawianej dyspozycji twórczej Alter upatruje w fundamentalnej rozbieżności między rzeczywistością powieściową a rzeczywistością empiryczną, w wywodzącej się od Cervantesa nieufności do słowa pisanego, w niewierze, iż można doskonale opisać świat, że można stworzyć jego pełen i niezależny od języka obraz. Za podstawowe sposoby wyrażania samoświadomości artystycznej w powieści autor uznaje wewnętrzną refleksję teoretyczną, dramatyczną obecność twórcy w dziele, ostentacyjne podkreślanie jego onnipotencji i arbitralności, przedkładanie czasu narracji ponad inne wymiary czasowe utworu, ograniczenie zainteresowania psychologią postaci, kubistyczny charakter planu przedmiotowego oraz zabiegi typograficzne przyciągające uwagę do samego środka przekazu, a szczególnie jego właściwości formalnych.

Funkcję elementu organizującego tok rozważań spełnia w książce szkic historycznej ewolucji autotematyzmu, który mimo iż nie zgłasza ambicji encyklopedycznych, naświetla wszystkie jej fazy — od narodzin zjawiska na kartach *Don Kichota* i jego pełnego wykształcenia się w *Tristramie Shandy* i *Kubusiu Fataliscie*, poprzez etap podporządkowania społecznym funkcjom powieści XIX-wiecznej, kontrybucję na rzecz prozy strumienia świadomości — do roli odgrywanej w fikcji postmodernistycznej, łącznie z uwzględnieniem specyfiki jego zastosowania w *nouveau roman*. Oprócz rozdziałów poświęconych odpowiednio Cervantesowi, Sterne'owi i Diderotowi najwięcej miejsca zajmuje ocena pisarstwa Nabokova jako najwybitniejszego przedstawiciela współczesnej powieści autotematycznej. Poza tym zwracają uwagę zwarte i interesujące rozważania dotyczące wkładu Melville'a i Gide'a w rozwój prezento-