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[Wright, Andrew. Herry [i.e. Henry] Fielding: Mask and feast]

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et ne consentirais à mettre sur le même rang, parmi ses contemporains, que Valéry, Proust et Claudel) (*De Proust à Camus*, p. 93; c'est M. qui souligne). Mais on sait aussi combien grande est la souplesse de son talent, son art de se mettre «dans la peau» de ses auteurs. A ce don, Allain était venu lui fournir une base morale très solide: «... Il avait coutume de dire, lisons-nous dans son préambule à l'essai sur Henri Bergson, que rien n'est plus stérile, lorsqu'on étudie l'œuvre d'un grand homme, que d'ergoter, de discuter et de nier. Il voulait que l'on s'efforçât d'entrer dans un système, de l'exposer aussi bien que l'on en était capable et de le faire sien, au moins pour la durée de l'étude. La critique ne lui semblait légitime que si la connaissance était d'abord parfaite, et il n'est pas de connaissance sans quelque effort de sympathie...» (*De Proust à Camus*, pp. 45-46). On peut être ou ne pas être d'accord avec André Maurois en ce qui concerne la grandeur d'Alain; mais il sera difficile de nier la grandeur de cette pédagogie.

André Maurois, en disciple d'Alain, tâche de comprendre sine ira et studio, et avec sympathie. Là où sa sympathie se heurte à des conceptions ou à des attitudes qui diffèrent des siennes, il s'efforce quand même de rester équitable et de respecter la grandeur d'un autre type. A titre d'exemple, on peut citer la manière dont il présente certains aspects de Jean-Paul Sartre. «Vacarme, c'est-à-dire célébrité, popularité, honneurs offerts et refusés. Jean d'Ormesson a remarqué que Sartre, comme permettait de le prévoir son enfance, est resté très 'Michel Strogoff', ou mieux encore, très 'Cyrano de Bergerac'. Célèbre, il sera l'homme des beaux gestes, des batailles verbales, d'une certaine forme de panache. 'Moi, c'est moralement que j'ai mon prix Nobel.' Et André Maurois, bien plus réaliste, poursuit: «Vieux Cyrano sympathique, non dépourvu de générosité, mais contraint de jouer, comme nous tous, 'en situation', tel que l'a fait son succès. L'homme qui refuse de parler à l'Université américaine de Cornell pour protester contre la politique des Etats-Unis au Vietnam, c'est le lecteur de Michel Strogoff. Il est permis de penser qu'il eût mieux servi la paix en allant à Cornell et en y disant des vérités que les étudiants américains étaient préparés à accueillir. Mais le refus était un beau geste.» André Maurois, ne cachant pas par là que lui-même penchait vers la seconde solution, celle de l'efficacité, clôt cette caractéristique de façon à ne pas simplement opposer les deux points de vue. Il ne veut pas jeter du discrédit sur ce qu'il n'approuve pourtant pas. Il élève le problème en des sphères intemporelles, le présente comme l'un des grands problèmes de l'humanité et ennoblit le choix en démontrant sa difficulté. «Eternel sera le débat entre l'efficacité et la pureté, trouve-t-il. Et ceux qui ont choisi l'efficacité gardent une nostalgie de la pureté» (*De Gide à Sartre*, pp. 284-285). L'efficacité est envisagée comme n'étant pas capable non plus de pleinement satisfaire celui qui a opté pour elle; la pureté, malgré l'aspect «cyranesque», n'en conserve pas moins l'attrait de sa grandeur morale.

Les essais d'André Maurois ne sont pas tous d'égale valeur. On y relèvera aussi, peut-être, certaines inexactitudes. Ainsi Romain Rolland, dans son drame révolutionnaire *Les Loups* (1898), n'est pas un «dreyfusiste», comme l'affirme André Maurois (*De Gide à Sartre*, p. 113); ses lettres (surtout celles à Malwida von Meysenbug qu'on a publiées seulement après la seconde guerre mondiale) prouvent autre chose. En tout cas, cependant, ces deux volumes d'essais se lisent avec agrément et profit. C'est vraiment un cours de la littérature française du XX^e siècle «par ses représentants marquants», accessible à un large public cultivé. Nous croyons que ces essais méritent qu'on ne les passe pas sous silence.

Otakar Novák

Andrew Wright, Hery Fielding: *Mask and Feast* (Chatto and Windus, London 1965, 214 pp.).

In his book on Fielding the novelist Professor Wright challenges many common notions of the didactic element in Fielding's art. From his analysis of *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* the novelist emerges as intent on providing cultivated pleasure for cultivated audience, as deliberately drawing a line between the delights of art and the drab facts of life. As portrayed in the study, Fielding is first of all a showman, not a moralist; his disinterested playfulness is "the hallmark of civilization founded on but superior to the squalor of the day-to-day" (p. 173).

In setting forth his ideas on the ultimate purpose of the novels Professor Wright is firm and unequivocal. He refers to his statements as to expressions of personal opinion, but within this framework he betrays no doubts and eschews all qualifications. He tries hard to prove his point by quoting from the eighteenth-century critical writings, by adducing facts from the author's life and, above all, by entering into a detailed discussion of the structure of the three novels. This analysis is rightly considered to be of primary importance and it is also the most rewarding part of the book. Probing into the "structure and movement" throw much new light on the

way in which Fielding arranged his material in order to win the applause of his perceptive readers. Professor Wright is especially illuminating in his comments on the principle of contrast and its application to the variations in the tone of successive passages. He convincingly demonstrates that the introductory chapters and the serious declarations of didactic purpose are fully incorporated in the structure of the novels, offering pleasurable contrast to the exuberant scenes which usually precede or follow. The argument in favour of the structural integrity of authorial intrusions is not invalidated even if they are taken at face value and not as contrived poses, which serve purely aesthetic aims.

The study shifts to more uncertain ground in the discussion of the novels as specimens of comic epic in prose. Professor Wright believes that Fielding was anxious to obliterate the tragic vision of life in his novels as completely as he was determined to take the moralizing sting out of his "cautionary" tales, because his ultimate aim was to gladden our hearts by stylizing life into "morally tolerable artifact". Although the analysis of means employed for the comic rendering of grave events is again very good, it does not substantiate the idea that Fielding's method of looking at matters from one remove necessarily deprives them of their tragic overtones.

In accordance with the central idea about the "festive" purpose of Fielding's art, *Joseph Andrews* is regarded as one of the peaks of English fiction. Its boisterous scenes, leading to no harmful consequences, and the figure of Parson Adams provide a wealth of persuasive material. Professor Wright is, however, a little disappointing in his treatment of the novel. In view of the fact that it is the episodes "written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes" that yield themselves most easily to explanation in the terms of cultivated delight, it is surprising to find that no comparison between the aims and methods of Cervantes and Fielding is attempted. A short discussion of these matters would help to put the principal idea of the study more in perspective. — While *Tom Jones* is ranked higher than *Joseph Andrews* on account of its more perfect organization, *Amelia* is relegated to a very low rung on the ladder. It is the only novel in which Professor Wright admits the existence of explicit moralizing. In this opinion, the failure of *Amelia* results from the incongruity of its artistic and overtly didactic goals. The emotional response to the more sordid episodes in the novel is supposed to be ambiguous; the reader, receiving no guidance from the author, is always left wondering whether he should enjoy such scenes as well constructed artefacts or be shocked by the brutality of life. Ultimately, the inadequacy of *Amelia* is ascribed to a change in Fielding's outlook, due to his illness. Professor Wright succinctly defines his position when he says that in his last book Fielding abandoned his purpose, but preserved his technique. His arguments, however, do little to dispel doubts about its tenability.

After the first two chapters, in which the point of view is established and structural analysis of the novels performed, the author turns to some minor problems. He is most compelling in the chapter on "tableaux", static scenes, considered here to be expressions of ostentatiously designed harmony. Fielding is shown to be able to arrest motion at the height of action and to describe simultaneous poses of various participants so as to produce pictorial impact, "as though one were looking carefully at a picture until the whole fell into shape" (p. 133). The Hogarthian quality of the static descriptions is also manifested in the choice of eccentric figures and topics.

The final sections, dealing with characters and language, are a definite anticlimax to the stimulating analyses which preceded them. Professor Wright is more interested in the thin texture of characters in Fielding's novels and in their deviations from verisimilitude than in the way in which they are introduced and developed. His discussion of the roles of Squire Allworthy and Squire Western in *Tom Jones* is little more than a case of special pleading in favour of the central thesis of his study. He is unwilling to admit that Fielding's characters are chiefly active on the moral plane, eliciting moral judgement from the reader, and that accounts for the unsatisfactory treatment of his theme. — In the chapter on language, the ease with which the author glosses over obvious weaknesses of Fielding's style again betrays the laudatory intent behind the book. (This can be discerned on many other occasions, e.g. behind the arguments for the unified structure of *Joseph Andrews*.) The idea that Fielding may be found wanting in his art is almost intorelable to Professor Wright. His bias directs his interest to those aspects of the novels which demonstrate Fielding's subtlety, skill and resourcefulness, and it may even be lurking behind his principal notion of the civilizing purpose, behind his antithesis of art and aim.

As the study does not define the difference between "art" and "life", on which its argument is founded, we may be justified in suspecting Professor Wright that his idea of the "festive" aim of Fielding's novels results from misplaced emphasis. No shift in emphasis, however, can invalidate the rich store of stimulating thought and observations for which the book deserves to be studied.

Aleš Tichý