

DENYS WYATT HARDING AND HIS WORK

*Meta Grosman**Biographical Sketch*

Denys Wyatt Harding was born on July 13, 1906, at Lowestoft, Suffolk. In 1930 he married Jessie Muriel Ward, with whom he later collaborated on several reviews published in *Scrutiny*. After elementary school he attended Lowestoft Secondary School and, from 1925 to 1928, Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He first studied English with Dr. F. R. Leavis as one of his supervisors. Having taken Part I of the English tripos, however, he switched to psychology. In making this decision he was influenced by the work of I. A. Richards for whose *Practical Criticism* he was one of the experimental readers. Although for a long time he was not committed to either of his two possible fields of scholarly interest, the chances of employment eventually made him earn his living in psychology rather than in English studies. Nevertheless, his association with the journal *Scrutiny* enabled him to pursue his interest in English literature and literary criticism, since — as he says — there was always the implied invitation of F. R. Leavis for him to write something for *Scrutiny*. Thus for more than fifty years he has combined successfully his professional academic field of social psychology with his vivid interest in literary criticism and literary theory, particularly in problems of reader response and of metrics. In retrospect, he regards English as the most important thing to him and psychology as his way of earning his living rather than making a career, even though he has always considered psychology very important too.

During his active years Professor Harding was an Investigator and Member of research staff of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, under Dr. C. S. Myers (1928—33), Lecturer in Social Psychology at the London School of Economics, under Professor Morris Ginsberg of the Department of Sociology (1933—38), Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Liverpool (1938—45), where he also contributed to one of the lecture courses in the English Department, and at the University of Manchester (1940—41 and 1944—45). He worked in a government department during his leave of absence for national service between 1941 and 1944. From 1945 to 1968 he was Professor of Psychology at the University of London, having a chair at Bedford College, London. In 1971—72 he gave the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge. He also gave lectures for the British Council. He was on lecturing visits to universities in India (for the British Council), in New Zealand (under the Commonwealth Uni-

versities Interchange Scheme), and in South Africa at Rhodes and other universities.

He was a member of the editorial board of *Scrutiny* between 1933 and 1947, and editor of the *British Journal of Psychology* (General Section) between 1948 and 1954. He was Honorary General Secretary of the British Psychological Society from 1944 to 1948, and also Honorary Secretary and Chairman of the Industrial Section of the Society.

As Emeritus Professor of Psychology he has continued to write essays on English literature and reviews of various literary works and psychological studies.

Together with his wife he now lives in a peaceful house, *Ashbocking Old Vicarage*, near Ipswich.

General Introduction

Denys W. Harding's studies in psychology, literary criticism and theory of reader response have been appearing during a period spanning more than fifty years. Along with such specialized studies as »A Study of Fruit Sorting« (1929), »Rhythm in Typewriting« (1931), »Rhythmization and Speed of Work« (1933) and his two books, *The Impulse to Dominate* (1941) and *Social Psychology and Individual Values* (1953), there continued to appear — first in *Scrutiny* and later also in other periodicals — a number of influential pieces of his literary criticism ranging from complex reviews of contemporary poetry of T. S. Eliot to still unparalleled analyses that occasionally brought about profound reevaluations of the work of several earlier writers.

Thus while the uninformed reader of Harding's collection of essays *Experience into Words* (1963) and of his elaborate treatment of the use of rhythmical possibilities of language in poetry and prose as presented in his *Words into Rhythm* (1976), may be somewhat surprised to learn that social psychology has always been Professor Harding's professional academic field of research, students and scholars of psychology may well be even more surprised to find that he has at the same time written some of the finest pieces of literary criticism to appear in English during the period in question.

However distinct psychological scholarship and literary criticism may be, in the work of Professor Harding the two disciplines are often fruitfully combined to produce most original results and fresh, profound insights that require close scrutiny in order that their subtle interrelations might be seen in their full complexity. This end can only be achieved by studying separately each field of Professor Harding's research. For the purpose of just such a study, it seems most suitable to distinguish not only between his psychological studies and literary criticism, but to treat separately the following distinguishable spheres of his writings:

- 1) His literary criticism.
- 2) His research and publications in the field of reader response and related studies of the effects of rhythm.
- 3) His writings on entertainment.
- 4) His studies in social and industrial psychology.

Any such classification, of course, is tentative, and designed only to enable separate treatments which in turn can be justified only by the oppor-

tunity they offer of revealing and dealing with individual features of Professor Harding's work analytically and comparatively. The close interaction of all the spheres within his activities must naturally never be lost sight of in such a treatment. Moreover, it is believed that this treatment will disclose a strong interrelatedness of all his work: an interrelatedness that is basically due to the unity of purpose and to an exceptional integrity of personality. This feature accounts not only for the unique development of Professor Harding's literary criticism and for his entirely original approach in the treatment of reader response as well as for the new insights presented in his evaluations of the role and place of entertainment, but it also imparts a special flavour to his psychological writings, typically containing numerous literary references.

Harding's Literary Criticism

I.

Professor Harding's association with *Scrutiny* started at its very beginning: »A Note on Nostalgia«, his first essay to appear therein, was published in its first issue, in May 1932. Acting on the recommendation of Harding's former teacher and later editor of *Scrutiny*, F. R. Leavis, the first editor of the journal L. C. Knights invited Harding to contribute to it. Later, between September 1933 and Spring 1947, Harding also served as a member of the editorial board of *Scrutiny*. The invitation to contribute to the journal always stood open, thus providing an invaluable and long-lasting incentive for Professor Harding to continue with his literary criticism along with his professional studies in the field of social psychology. In addition to his literary essays and numerous reviews, *Scrutiny* published also some of his other writings perfectly fitting in its wider concern with the way »the word was going,« a concern part historical, part sociological, and part moral.¹

Besides »A Note on Nostalgia,« the first volume of *Scrutiny* published also Harding's lengthy evaluation of the work of his former teacher I. A. Richards and his numerous reviews.² The second volume of the journal brought his reviews in the related fields of psychology and other social sciences, and in collaboration with his wife J. M. Harding, also in the field

¹ Quoted from the dust jacket (front flap) of *Scrutiny XX: Retrospect Indexes Errata* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963). Harding's writings of this kind include »Propaganda and Rationalization in War,« *Scrutiny*, IV. 1935: 4—16; and »Custom of War and the Notion of Peace,« *Scrutiny*, IX. (1940): 202—30.

² »Evaluations (I): I. A. Richards,« *Scrutiny* I, (1933): 327—38. The reviews appeared as follows: »Many Psychologies« (review of *Psychologies of 1930*, ed. by Carl Murchison; of *The Mind and Its Body*, by Charles Fox; and of *The Nervous Temperament*, by Millais Culpin and Mary Smith), *Scrutiny* I, (1932): 83—85; review of *New Bearings in English Poetry*, by F. R. Leavis, *Scrutiny* I (1932): 87—90; review of *Mencius on the Mind*, by I. A. Richards, *Scrutiny* I (1932): 184—87; review of *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, by J. Piaget, *Scrutiny* (1932): 308—10; review of *The Gestalt Theory*, by Bruno Petermann, *Scrutiny* (1933): 419—20; and review of *The Children We Teach*, by Susan Isaacs, *Scrutiny* (1933): 420.

of art education.³ Finally, there was also his first contribution where he discussed the work of T. S. Eliot.⁴ The third volume published his pioneering essay on Isaac Rosenberg,⁵ whose work he later also edited,⁶ and several reviews, among them the review of Eliot's *The Rock, Book of Words*.⁷ His article »Propaganda and Rationalization in War«⁸ appeared in the fourth volume which brought his seminal review »L. H. Myers«⁹ and several other reviews.¹⁰

Among his reviews published in the fifth volume of *Scrutiny* there is a long discussion of Eliot's *Collected Poems 1909—1935*.¹¹ The sixth volume contains his first study in the field of reader response, titled »The Role of the Onlooker,«¹² the article »The Cultural Background of Intelligence Testing,¹³ and again several reviews.¹⁴ Some of his reviews appeared again in the seventh volume,¹⁵ while the eighth published his famous essay »Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen,«¹⁶ which has been reprinted

³ »Social Eddies« (review of *Recent Social Trends in the United States*, and of *Psychology and Social Progress*, by R. B. Cattell), *Scrutiny* II (1933): 313—19; review of *Social Development in Young Children*, by S. S. Isaacs,, *Scrutiny* II (1933): 321—23; »Changing Emphasis in Anthropology« (review of *History, Psychology, and Culture*, by Alexander Goldenweiser), *Scrutiny* II (1934): 411—13; and (with J. M. Harding) »Art for the Common Reader« (review of *Art Now*, by Herbert Read; of *Art and Counterfeit*, by Margaret Bulley; and of *The Modern Movement in Art*, by R. H. Wilenski), *Scrutiny* II (1934): 393—99.

⁴ »Mr Eliot at Harvard« (review of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, by T. S. Eliot), *Scrutiny* II (1933): 289—92.

⁵ »Aspects of the Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg,« *Scrutiny* III (1935): 358—69.

⁶ (Edited with Gordon Bottomley). *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1937).

⁷ »The Rock,« *Scrutiny* III (1934): 180—83. Other reviews published in this volume include: review of *Poetry Direct and Oblique*, by E. M. W. Tillyard, *Scrutiny* III (1934): 89—90; review of *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, by C. G. Jung, *Scrutiny*, (1934): 109—10; »The Twilight of Intelligence« (review of *John Middleton Murry*, by Rayner Heppenstall, and of *Aspects of Literature*, by J. Middleton Murry), *Scrutiny* III (1934): 314—16; »Mechanisms of Misery (review of *Tender Is the Night*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald), *Scrutiny* III (1934): 316—19; and »The Solid Virtues« (review of *Claudius the God*, by Robert Graves), *Scrutiny* III (1935): 421—22.

⁸ *Scrutiny* IV (1935): 4—16.

⁹ »L. H. Myers« (review of *The Root and the Flower*, by L. H. Myers), *Scrutiny* IV (1935): 79—81.

¹⁰ »Mr Murry's Autobiography (review of *Between Two Worlds*, by J. Middleton Murry), *Scrutiny* IV (1935): 100—102; »Ethical Taste« (review of *Patterns of Culture*, by Ruth Benedict), *Scrutiny* (1935): 214—15; and (with Erik Mesterton). »A New Critic of Ballet« (review of *Russian Ballet through Russian Eyes*, by V. Kameneff, and of *Russian Ballets*, by Adrian Stokes), *Scrutiny* IV (1936): 435—38.

¹¹ »T. S. Eliot, 1925—1935,« *Scrutiny* (1936): 171—76.

¹² *Scrutiny* VI (1937): 247—58.

¹³ *Scrutiny* VI (1937): 144—54.

¹⁴ »Detachment from Social Norms« (review of *The Psychology of Social Norms*, by Muzafer Sherif), *Scrutiny* VI (1937): 103—5; review of *Mass-Observation*, by Charles Madge and Tom Harrison, *Scrutiny* VI (1937): 200—201; and »Vitality in Social Surveys« (review of *Middletown in Transition*, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, and of *May the Twelfth, Mass-Observation Day-Survey*, ed. by Humphrey Jennings et al.), *Scrutiny* VI (1937): 313—15.

¹⁵ Review of *Poetry and Anarchism*, by Herbert Read, *Scrutiny* VII (1938): 345—46; »Social Relationships« (review of *The Clue to History*, by John Macmurray), *Scrutiny* (1939): 431—34.

¹⁶ *Scrutiny* VIII (1940): 346—62.

time and again ever since and certainly belongs among his best-known pieces of criticism. Volume nine brought »The Theme of »The Ancient Mariner,«¹⁷ which has also been much reprinted, his essay »Custom of War and the Notion of Peace,«¹⁸ and several reviews.¹⁹ Volume eleven published his complex review of Eliot's *Little Gidding*,²⁰ volume fourteen his essay »The Rhythmical Intention in Wyatt's Poetry,«²¹ and volume eighteen two reviews of the studies of F. Scott Fitzgerald.²²

In the course of the last two years of the existence of *Scrutiny*, Professor Harding's essays began to appear elsewhere as well, namely in *The Kenyon Review* which brought his »Coherence of Theme in Donne's Poetry,«²³ and later »Progression of Theme in Eliot's Plays,«²⁴ and in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature* which published »The Poetry of Wyatt,« »The Character of Literature from Blake to Byron,« »William Blake,« and »Shelley's Poetry.«²⁵ In 1963 appeared his collection of essays under the title *Experience into Words* that has also been reissued several times.²⁶

The year 1965 saw the publication of his »Introduction« to Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, which volume he also edited.²⁷ In 1968, he wrote »Character and Caricature in Jane Austen« for the anthology *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*,²⁸ and in 1970 yet another essay on the same author, »Two Aspects of Jane Austen's Development.«²⁹

In 1969 he published his first essay on Shakespeare under the title »Women's Fantasy of Manhood: A Shakespearian Theme« that appeared in the *Shakespeare Quarterly*,³⁰ to be followed ten years later by »Shakespeare's Final View of Women.«³¹ In 1972, he wrote »The Devotions Now« for the

¹⁷ *Scrutiny* IX (1941): 334—42.

¹⁸ *Scrutiny* IX (1940): 202—30.

¹⁹ »Folk-Song in Its Cultural Setting« (review of *The Blue Grove: The Poetry of the Uraons*, by W. G. Archer), *Scrutiny* IX (1940): 94—96; »A Statement of Positives« (review of *The Pool of Vishnu*, by L. H. Myers), *Scrutiny* IX (1940): 161—65; and »A Scientist on Propaganda« (review of *Political Propaganda*, by F. C. Bartlett), *Scrutiny* IX (1940): 284—85.

²⁰ »We Have Not Reached Conclusion,« *Scrutiny* XI (1943): 216—19.

²¹ *Scrutiny* XIV (1946): 90—102.

²² »Scott Fitzgerald« (review of *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work*, ed. by A. Kazin, and of *The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, by Arthur Mizener), *Scrutiny* XVIII (1951): 166—74.

²³ *The Kenyon Review* (1951): 427—44.

²⁴ *The Kenyon Review* (1956): 337—60.

²⁵ Boris Ford, ed., *The Age of Chaucer. Volume 1 of the Pelican Guide to English Literature* (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin/Pelican, 1954; reprinted with revisions 1959), pp. 195—210; Boris Ford, ed., *From Blake to Byron. Volume 5 of the Pelican Guide to English Literature* (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin/Pelican, 1957; reprinted with revisions 1962), pp. 33—64, 67—84, and 207—19.

²⁶ *Experience into Words: Essays on Poetry* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963). Verbatim reprints: New York: Horizon Press, 1964; Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin, 1974; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

²⁷ »Introduction,« in *Jane Austen: »Persuasion« with A Memoir of Jane Austen* by J. E. Austen-Leigh (Penguin English Library series. Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin, 1965), pp. 7—26.

²⁸ Ed. by B. C. Southam (London and Henley-on-Thames, Oxon.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 83—105.

²⁹ *Theoria*, Vol. 35 (October 1970): 1—16.

³⁰ *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1969): 245—53.

³¹ *The Times Literary Supplement*, November 30, 1979, pp. 59—61.

volume titled *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*,³² and in 1974 »What the Thunder Said« for »*The Waste Land*« in *Different Voices*.³³

During all these years, Professor Harding has continued to publish elaborate reviews — often amounting to lengthy complex analyses — of various books in the field of social and industrial psychology, related studies, and of literary and critical works. With respect to *Scrutiny*, his reviewing was a significant contribution to the efforts of this journal to keep »the reader abreast of the intellectual life of the time.³⁴ Elsewhere — in *Spectator*, *New Statesman*, *The Oxford Magazine*, and several other periodicals — his reviewing has invariably offered a well-argued and reliable opinion of the books treated.

Experience into Words is thus far his only collection of critical essays. The volume contains ten essays brought together from various sources: Four are reprints of essays published previously, namely »Experience and Symbol in Blake« (pp. 31—52), reprinted from *The Pelican Guide to English Literature* where it appeared under the title »William Blake;« »Aspects of the Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg« (pp. 91—103), reprinted verbatim from *Scrutiny*; »Progression of Theme in Eliot's Modern Play's« (pp. 132—62), a reprint — with a newly added »A Postscript on 'The Elder Statesman'« (pp. 156—62) — of »Progression of Theme in Eliot's Plays,« which had originally appeared in *The Kenyon Review*; and »The Hinterland of Thought« (pp. 175—97), a verbatim reprint of the essay originally published in *Metaphor and Symbol: Proceedings of the Twelfth Symposium of the Colston Research society*.³⁵

»Donne's Anticipation of Experience« (pp. 11—30) is a revised version of »Coherence of Theme in Donne's Poetry« from *The Kenyon Review*;³⁶ similarly, »The Theme of 'The Ancient Mariner'« (pp. 53—71) is a considerably revised version of the original from *Scrutiny*.³⁷ The revision elaborates on the polemic against contemporary interpretations of this poem, which tended to bring in irrelevant biographical and psychoanalytical elements. »Words and Meanings: A Note on Eliot's Poetry« (pp. 104—11) is an original discussion of the possible sources and effects of obscurity in Eliot's poetry; however, it includes also the last part of his elaborate review of *Eliot's Collected Poems 1909—1935*.³⁸ »The Changed Outlook in Eliot's Later Poems« (pp. 112—31) brings together several of Professor Harding's earlier reviews of Eliot's poetry (all from *Scrutiny*), namely »The Rock,«³⁹ »T. S. Eliot, 1925—1935,«⁴⁰ of which the last five paragraphs are omitted and appear in the middle of the preceding essay (that is, »Words and Meanings: A Note on Eliot's Poetry«), and »We Have Not Reached Conclusion.«⁴¹ This essay ends with Professor Harding's paper that was originally prepared for the British Council Summer School in Oxford in 1953, in which he says that

³² Ed. by A. J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 385—403.

³³ Ed. by A. D. Moody (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), pp. 15—28.

³⁴ Quoted from the dust jacket (back flap) of *Scrutiny XX: Retrospect Indexes Errata* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

³⁵ Ed. by L. C. Knights and Basil Cottle (London: Butterworths Scientific Publications, 1960), pp. 10—23.

³⁶ Cf. note 23 for bibliographic details.

³⁷ Cf. note 17 for bibliographic details.

³⁸ Cf. note 11 for bibliographic details.

³⁹ Cf. note 7 for bibliographic details.

⁴⁰ Cf. note 11 for bibliographic details.

⁴¹ Cf. note 20 for bibliographic details.

he »tried to be more explicit about the change from the earlier to the later poems.« (p. 125).

The remaining two essays, »Concrete Embodiment: Emblem and Symbol« (pp. 72—90), and »Reader and Author« (pp. 163—74) appear in this collection for the first time.

With the sole exception of *Experience into Words*, Professor Harding's criticism, like his studies of reader response and leisure, has never been collected systematically. Scattered in many diverse periodicals and written for various occasions, it is frequently hard to obtain and may consequently strike the reader as being fragmentary. It is hoped, however, that a closer examination of his critical writings will reveal an integrity and coherence only rarely found in more voluminous and systematically organized bodies of criticism: the integrity of purpose which comes to expression in the central themes and preoccupations that are traceable in most of his criticism.

It is not the intention of this study to determine the position of Professor Harding's writings within the framework of English literary criticism: everybody who is familiar with *Scrutiny* and its role in the literary and broader cultural scene knows that he was one of its editors for many years. Professor Walsh believes him to have been »perhaps most important of all« principal collaborators of *Scrutiny*.⁴² The purpose of this study is rather to make at least a preliminary attempt to reveal some characteristics and preoccupations of Professor Harding's criticism and, in this way, to help establish and clarify its enduring interest and its substantial contribution to the finer understanding of individual works of literature and the authors he has chosen to discuss and analyze. We will try to point out to the possibilities of a new approach and fresh insights that Professor Harding's work has offered to the field of criticism. At present, however, the last-named feature and especially its realization remains a challenge yet to be unravelled before it can be appreciated to the full.

It is further hoped that the Bibliography of Professor Harding's writings in all the spheres of his activities will, at least temporarily, make up for the lack of a comprehensive collection of his writings, and make his criticism better-known and more easily available to the interested reader. The Bibliography is fairly comprehensive; it follows the main body of this study.

II.

The foregoing presentation indicates that Professor Harding's literary criticism has tended to centre upon a few authors only: some of them stand out because he has kept coming back to their work, whereas about some others he just wrote one single essay, perhaps even only one illuminating review. The selection of the authors he has chosen to discuss and write about repeatedly may seem at first quite puzzling: it includes a number of English poets from Wyatt to Eliot, Eliot also as a playwright, while among novelists only Jane Austen has been treated by him repeatedly and consequently in more detail. About the novels of some other novelists,

⁴² William Walsh, *F. R. Leavis* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980), p. 26.

such as L. H. Myers and Iris Murdoch, Professor Harding has written lengthy reviews that meet the standards of the best in criticism.⁴³

Similarly, also the aspects of individual works and authors that Professor Harding has spoken about are manifold, ranging from the rhythmical structure of Wyatt's poetry to the psychoanalytical interpretation of Eliot's plays, and including detailed analyses of various aspects of Jane Austen's work. The last-named provide the best insight there is into a variety of aspects and their importance that can only be revealed through attentive reading and acute insight. His first essay on Jane Austen's work, »Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen,«⁴⁴ suggests a different reading of her work by calling attention to and analyzing some statements that are scattered at different points of her novels and which provide an initially unexpected and, accordingly, for long unnoticed critical comment on the society portrayed in them. While in his »Introduction« to *Persuasion*⁴⁵ he analyzes Jane Austen's preoccupation with the problems of survival of a sensitive individual in the middle of »the intense, highly organized pressure of a close-knit society« and examines the conflicts emerging from such a situation, in his next two essays on her Professor Harding returns to individual aspects of her novels. Thus Jane Austen's elaborate technique of character portrayal and its fine variants are considered in his »Character and Caricature in Jane Austen,« written for a volume of *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*.⁴⁶ whereas her use of dialogue, its syntactical and rhythmical structure, and especially the convention and effects of longer speeches along with her use of the convention of comedy, are analyzed in »Two Aspects of Jane Austen's Development,« published in the South African journal *Theoria*.⁴⁷

If Professor Harding's freedom of choice and the absence of the need to systemize his writings surprise us at first sight, we must keep it in mind that having decided to work professionally in the field of psychology, Professor Harding has been completely free from any academic pressure forcing him to write criticism of the English literature. In this manner, he has always been able to write only about the works that really appealed to him or arose his interest in some other way, and to discuss only such aspects of those works as he felt he was able to examine by way of original comments revealing their previously unnoticed qualities and thus offering his readers the possibility of a more complex and wider appreciation. It was in this way that he has produced some outstanding pieces of criticism without ever attempting to contrive a voluminous critical body dealing with a specialized topic, whether period, genre, or an individual author, and without advocating a uniform method of critical approach and constructing some critical system.

Subject only to his intention to reveal some previously unnoticed quality of the work under discussion, and in this way to contribute to the possibility of readers' more accurate understanding, Professor Harding's criticism is always characterized by the freedom to pursue this intention without making

⁴³ Even now Professor Harding, in his characteristically modest manner, describes his reading in English as »very patchy«.

⁴⁴ Cf. note 16 for bibliographic details.

⁴⁵ Cf. note 27 for bibliographic details.

⁴⁶ Cf. note 28 for bibliographic details.

⁴⁷ Cf. note 29 for bibliographic details.

use of any standardized model. It never turns into a patterned procedure to be applied mechanically to any work. Depending on the work and author discussed, on the particular aspect which Professor Harding wants to illuminate and show the significance of, or on the elements that have been previously overlooked but seem to him important for better understanding, his criticism is invariably adjusted to the task in hand. It can proceed from the examination of a few unexpected sentences in the dialogues in Jane Austen's novels,⁴⁸ or move anywhere between »examining themes that can be seen in a broad survey,« as for instance in his discussion of Donne's poems⁴⁹ and T. S. Eliot's plays,⁵⁰ and »a closer scrutiny of the way the poet is using his words and statements,«⁵¹ as for instance in his essays on the poetry of Blake,⁵² Shelley,⁵³ and Eliot.⁵⁴ Thus characterized by great adaptability, his criticism hardly invites any generalization: it rather requires utmost caution in the attempt to establish common features. Always highly original, Professor Harding has been able to produce illuminating analyses of various authors and to use his critical approach effectively in the study of any form, from short poems and plays to novels.

The adaptability of Professor Harding's criticism should be accounted for in terms of his interest in various aspects of the work under discussion. Frequently used in the very titles of his essays,⁵⁵ the word »aspect« clearly indicates his awareness of his specialized and advantageously limited purpose. His criticism thus never pretends to be all-inclusive, never claims to offer a systematic analysis of every word, line, part, or other features and qualities of a certain work. On the contrary, he usually centres his analysis upon one significant aspect or quality, such as special use of words, recurrent theme, symbolism, and thereby makes it possible for the reader to see the whole work in a different light. He never tries to create the impression that he has said everything that can be said about the work discussed, that he has exhausted its meaning, as it were. He rather makes it quite clear that the richness and the complex character of the meaning of literary works cannot be laid bare by criticism, but have to be discovered by each reader for himself. Believing that the reader cannot and should not simply take over from the critic the appreciation of a poem, play, etc., but must rather grasp it by himself on the basis of his own first-hand experience, namely through reading it attentively and repeatedly, Professor Harding points out that the critic should not spoon-feed the reader but rather stimulate him to return to the literary work with the possibility of a better appreciation.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ »Regulated Hatred;« cf. note 16.

⁴⁹ »Coherence and Theme in Donne's Poetry;« cf. note 23.

⁵⁰ »Progression of Theme in Eliot's Plays;« cf. note 24.

⁵¹ *Experience into Words*, p. 9; cf. note 26.

⁵² »William Blake,« in *From Blake to Byron*, pp. 67—84; cf. note 25.

⁵³ »Shelley's Poetry,« *ibid.*, pp. 207—19.

⁵⁴ »Words and Meanings: A Note on Eliot's Poetry,« in *Experience into Words*, pp. 104—11; cf. p. 8 in the main body of this study.

⁵⁵ For instance, »Aspects of the Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg;« »Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen;« and »Two Aspects of Jane Austen's Development.« Cf. notes 5, 16, and 29, respectively, for bibliographic details.

⁵⁶ Cf. »The Literary Critic« (The first of six talks on »The Critic's Tasks«, *The Listener*, October 15, 1953, p. 637.

Professor Harding's decision to focus his critical attention on one aspect or quality of the work is deliberate; it derives from his recognition of its importance and from his desire to persuade the reader of its importance for an enriched appreciation. Therefore it does not represent any kind of limitation in regard to his critical treatment, but rather imparts to it additional clarity and firmness of purpose. It is certainly unnecessary to emphasize the fact that Professor Harding as a rule chooses to discuss and present such aspects or qualities as are very important and usually relevant to the contemporary reader. Among such aspects and qualities can be mentioned the rhythmical structure of Wyatt's poetry,⁵⁷ the importance of symbolism in Blake's poetry,⁵⁸ and Jane Austen's preoccupation with the efforts of an individual to preserve his identity in a highly conventional society.⁵⁹

The aspect or quality that Professor Harding chooses to speak about, however, is never treated in isolation. It is always related to the whole work, and the discussion itself is carried out on the basis of his own well-argued assessment of »what the author really has done.«⁶⁰

His discussion always relies on his exceptional responsiveness and insight into the literary work, and derives its power from his unique sensitiveness to the language of a poem or of a novel. Thus his analyses proceed by the characteristic attention to the words printed on the page, by concentrating on concrete detail, and by showing — as precisely as possible — »what features or quality of the work itself and what reference points and comparisons in other literature«⁶¹ his statements and observations are based on. It is owing to these characteristics that his criticism never creates some vague impression on the part of the reader: it consistently conforms to Professor Harding's own recommendation that the critic has to exhibit the materials bearing on his judgement. This requirement he considers no simple task: »Exhibiting the materials for a judgement will generally mean giving a very close account of the work, perhaps a really minute examination of parts of it, or a careful discussion, supported by plenty of quotation and comparison, of what may be a very elusive quality.«⁶²

Professor Harding's rigorous approach seems to have originated in his suspicion of idiosyncratic explanations and of the habit of reading into a poem significance that it could not have for its author. It proceeds from his belief that writing criticism calls for an intellectual effort on the part of the critic as well as his readers. Accordingly, the critic should never use any work as an excuse for releasing his personal thoughts and emotions,⁶³ nor should he stimulate such or similar emotions in the reader. On the contrary, the latter should be induced to try to grasp the literary work as accurately as possible, by himself.

It goes without saying that his analysis of any work, its aspects, qualities or themes is generally backed by his extensive knowledge of biogra-

⁵⁷ »The Rhythmical Intention in Wyatt's Poetry;« cf. note 21 for bibliographic details.

⁵⁸ »William Blake,« in *From Blake to Byron*, pp. 67—84; cf. note 25.

⁵⁹ »Introduction,« in *Jane Austen: »Persuasion;«* cf. note 27 for bibliographic details.

⁶⁰ »The Literary Critic,« p. 637; cf. note 56 for bibliographic details.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 638.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 638.

⁶³ Cf. »The Theme of 'The Ancient Mariner,« in *Experience into Words*, pp. 67ff.

phical details and of the social setting of the work. However, biographical details and social settings never become his preoccupation,⁶⁴ because they are simply used as possible sources of additional elucidation or confirmatory evidence. Here Professor Harding again strictly observed his own recommendation to be applied in the field of literary criticism:

... the essential guiding principle is to keep close to the poem (or whatever the form of writing is) and as far as possible use only what it says, either avoiding or using with extreme caution importations from psychological theory and biography... (The poem) exists in its own right and forms our only necessary datum for literary criticism.⁶⁵

III.

In spite of the above-described adaptability of Professor Harding's critical approach and the variety of subjects he has discussed, and despite his disregard for systematization and the absence of any effort at building an organized body of criticism, some concepts recurring in several of his essays do invite speculations about their importance. His preoccupation with experience will doubtless be the first to catch the reader's attention; it is also given due emphasis both in the title of his critical collection *Experience into Words* and in the opening sentences of his Foreword to it:

The essays brought together here deal with the relation between the writer's words and some other, non-literary experience, whether his own or his readers'. It is a dangerous area of interest, which comes and goes in fashion according as one of two errors becomes more evident: the first, forgetting that the understanding of a poem (by the author or his readers) is an experience quite distinct from any other experiences on which its creation and understanding may depend; the second, neglecting the requirement that the poem should be anchored closely enough in comprehended sense for the writer and the reader to be relating it to the same kind of other experiences.⁶⁶

It is thus immediately made clear in the Foreword that the word »experience« will be used to refer to different types of experience, namely the literary and the non-literary. Therefore in Professor Harding's essays, the term »experience« may describe the non-literary experiences of a particular author (as for instance in »Donne's Anticipation of Experience,«⁶⁷ »Experience and Symbol in Blake,«⁶⁸ and sometimes in the essays on the poetry of Isaac Rosenberg, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and T. S. Eliot), or the experiences of some characters (as in his discussion of T. S. Eliot's plays), or the human experiences as embodied in poetry and prose, which offer to the reader the possibility of a literary experience. The use of experiences as embodied in poetry seems to merit special attention: it appears to represent an original attempt to formulate the matter of the poem, or rather

⁶⁴ An exception to this statement can perhaps be seen in his essay on »The Character of Literature from Blake to Byron,« in *From Blake to Byron*, pp. 33—64; cf. note 25.

⁶⁵ *Experience into Words*, pp. 53—54.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁷ In *Experience into Words*, pp. 11—30.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 31—52.

to answer the question of »what the poet is talking about« in terms of a salient human experience. And since Professor Harding, with his characteristic modesty, describes his essays simply as »attempts to understand what the poet is talking about,« his way of answering this question is even more important.

Speaking about the function of evaluation, Professor Harding points out that any intellectual analysis must do full justice to the emotional quality of the critic's experience. The account it takes of any element must be in terms of literary experience. Irrespective of whether the critic finds the expressed beliefs congenial or uncogential, »his concern has to be not with the beliefs themselves but with the human experience that they allow the writer to make available to us.«⁶⁹ Since Professor Harding constantly observes his own recommendation, the attempts to formulate the matter of the poem in terms of some possible human experience can be traced in many of his essays.

Writing about the poetry of Wyatt, he argues that it has remained humanly important for some four hundred years on account of the fact that »his poems reflect not only the literary interest of his day but also the realities of human experience«⁷⁰ in his social milieu. The experience directly handled by Wyatt is identified in the following manner:

»The salient experiences that Wyatt's love-poetry records are the emotional disturbances of falling in love, his expectation of rebuff, his rather submissive pleading, and his protest and lamentation at betrayal. But this is not the point on which to end one's exploration of his love-poetry, for within the broad outline indicated by these features there are innumerable more finely differentiated responses to particular events and experiences.«⁷¹

»The Poetry of Wyatt« has been revised considerably for the new edition of *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*⁷² in order to incorporate some results of recent work⁷³ and to suit the new situation in which Wyatt is »once again in danger of being lost to living enjoyment, this time in mausoleum of scholarship.«⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Wyatt's concern with shaping and expressing an attitude towards his own experience and his handling of lasting human

⁶⁹ »The Literary Critic,« p. 638.

⁷⁰ »The Poetry of Wyatt,« in *The Age of Chaucer*, p. 196; cf. note 25.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁷² The revision was published in Boris Ford, ed., *Medieval Literature: Chaucer and the Alliterative Tradition. Volume I, Part One of The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, revised and expanded ed. (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin/Pelican, 1982), pp. 353—70.

⁷³ The revision incorporates some results of Professor Harding's own reviews of the studies concerned with Wyatt, such as »The Axe Is Home« (review of *Unpublished Poems* by Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Circle, ed. by Kenneth Muir), *New Statesman*, May 12, 1961, pp. 758—59, and »A World of Agents« (review of *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, by Kenneth Muir), *New Statesman*, March 13, 1964, pp. 406—7.

Professor Harding had reviewed Wyatt's poetry also before the publication of the first edition of *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*: Review of *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, ed. with an Introduction by Kenneth Muir, *The Review of English Studies*, n. s., Vol. 2, No. 6 (April 1951): 162.

⁷⁴ »The Poetry of Wyatt,« in *Medieval Literature: Chaucer and the Alliterative Tradition*, p. 353; cf. note 72 for bibliographic details.

concerns are yet again emphasized as the most important sources of the value of his poetry.⁷⁵

Analyzing the poetry of Blake, Professor Harding defines the constant object of Blake's writing as »the understanding and evaluation of human experience, especially in certain crucial situations,«⁷⁶ and goes on to argue that short poems are finer than long books »for their more direct statement of human experience in place of the too-cosmic or cosmologized disguise of experience in the books.«⁷⁷ The various human experiences expressed in Blake's poetry are summed up in the following way:

»The personal issues with which he wrestled seemed to him to be also the salient problems of human life. They included questions of the proper place of intellectual control in the total economy of the personality, the place of impulse, the relations between authority and those it controls (and therefore between elders and children), the relations of the sexes, the folly of moral generalities (one law for the lion and the ox), the poison of jealousy, and the overwhelming importance of forgiveness.«⁷⁸

Harding's »the Theme of 'The Ancient Mariner'« also describes what this poem appears to be about in terms of the crucial experience presented therein:

»The human experience around which Coleridge centres the poem is surely the depression and the sense of isolation and unworthiness which the Mariner describes in Part IV. The suffering he describes is of a kind which is perhaps not found except in slightly pathological conditions, but which, pathological or not, has been felt by a great many people.«⁷⁹

In the essay »Concrete Embodiment: Emblem and Symbol« Professor Harding again takes up the two different ways of embodying the experience of depression and guilt, that is, experiences »which are among our human hazards,«⁸⁰ as they are presented in Cowper's »The Castaway« and in Coleridge's poem.

When discussing the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Professor Harding tries again to define its »identifying experience« of suffering⁸¹ and depicts Eliot's later poems in the following manner:

»Apart from their extraordinary effectiveness as arrangements of words, they present in theme and mood important and recurrent possibilities of experience. If their protest, distaste, ironic detachment are in some degree immature, they are also deeply entrenched as possibilities for sensitive people in our culture.«⁸²

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 369—70.

⁷⁶ »William Blake,« in *From Blake to Byron*, p. 70.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

⁷⁹ »The Theme of 'The Ancient Mariner,' *Scrutiny*, IX (1941): 335

The same description appears with some minor changes only, in *Experience into Words*, pp. 55—56.

⁸⁰ In *Experience into Words*, p. 77.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 119.

⁸² Ibid., p. 131. Cf. also A. D. Moody, ed., »The Waste Land« in *Different Voices* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), pp. 16, 19.

Examining T. S. Eliot's modern plays *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1950), and *The Confidential Clerk* (1954), Professor Harding first observes that for Eliot these plays have provided »a method of treating problems of actual experience — a method midway between the direct statement of personal experience (which Eliot makes a point of avoiding) and the digestion of experience into abstract contemplation and remote symbol as in the *Quantets*.«⁸³ The question of what Eliot has done in these plays is answered as follows:

»The attempt to say what Eliot does in these plays leads in the direction of an assessment, at least to the extent of claiming that the plays are seriously concerned with experience of deep importance in human lives. They all deal with human loneliness, and with more facets of it than I have touched on...«⁸⁴

Professor Harding's endeavour to describe »what the poet is talking about« in terms of some possible human experience seems to have originated in his ever-present awareness that the words of a literary work are about the matter presented in it, without which words per se would hardly have any significance. It is the matter — a significant human experience, or rather a lasting human concern embodied in the literary work — that ultimately determines whether there is in it any living value for the reader. In the light of this explanation, Professor Harding's identification of the experience or concern embodied in the literary work can be seen as an effort to penetrate into the very essence, »the core« of the work under discussion.

In this sense, his pursuit aiming to unravel and define the central human experience embodied in the work can be regarded also as his attempt to identify and indicate its value. This attempt may reflect — in Professor Harding's own original way — the conviction sustained by *Scrutiny* that literature matters crucially to civilization because it represents a human reality.⁸⁵ However, the attempt to unravel the central human experience on the basis of an original formulation in terms of a significant human experience, should be at least in part attributed to Professor Harding's thorough knowledge of psychology, particularly in the matter of human realities, and to the profound insights this knowledge enabled him to come to. Although only exceptionally conceived in psychological terms,⁸⁶ the description of the human experience as embodied in individual works reveals the depth of the understanding of man that certainly surpasses mere literary training. Profound psychological knowledge is always taken for granted, though — in his typically modest manner — it never becomes obtrusive and therefore never turns into some other form of psychologizing or imparting psycho-analytical elements to the meaning of a work being interpreted. The question of the manner and extent of the influence of his psychological training upon his literary criticism, however, is too complex to be dealt with in

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 133—34.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Scrutiny XX: Retrospect Indexes Errata* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 4.

⁸⁶ In *Experience into Words*, for instance, such terms include »the cry of the weaned child« (p. 120), »separation experience« (p. 134), and »love affairs of psychologically unweaned« (p. 155).

this context, and will be therefore taken up in a later study, since it definitely merits independent treatment.

Further, Professor Harding's work aiming at the formulation of »what the poet is talking about« in terms of some possible human experience seems to be also an expression of his distrust of paraphrase, or at least of »an undue preoccupation with the poem's paraphrasable meaning«⁸⁷ and of an exaggerated exegesis as practiced by some critics. Thus he explicitly warns the reader against such a paraphrase: »The concealed inadequacy of paraphrase is always waiting to entrap us,«⁸⁸ because instead of stimulating the reader to return to poetry with unsettled mind and new questions, it may invite mere acquiescence and leave him satisfied and thus inert. He does not favour exaggerated exegesis because it may easily sacrifice a very general, complex meaning by »extended but limiting interpretations«⁸⁹ and bring into a poem »intellectual meanings that are too remotely and indirectly derived from the words.«⁹⁰ He recommends utmost caution in identifying meanings and implications in poetry:

»... none of the wider implications are of literary importance unless they enrich our reading of the poem itself; however much we draw out extended meanings we have to be sure that they can be telescoped back into the poem and be present to us when we read it again — present to us with immediacy, not through a secondary process of reflection or decoding... Whatever implied symbolic meanings we claim to see must be shown as arising from particular features of the poem and tethered firmly to the poet's own words.«⁹¹

Symbols make the situation even more complicated:

»... we may neither of us, reader or author, be confident in detaching a limited, translatable meaning, because we are not certain what aspects of the event and what associations of the words describing it can be ruled out as irrelevant.«⁹²

The poetry of Blake, for instance, achieves its effect thanks to its compression of meaning abounding in imagery and ideas that carry »symbolic implications scarcely susceptible of reasoned exposition,« gaining »their coherence and ordered effect through unexplicit associations and incompletely formulated reference...«⁹³

Professor Harding also offers a fresh solution of how to avoid the reductive paraphrase. Speaking of *The Tyger*, he notes:

The essential thing is to recognize how rich a cluster of half-activated associations and potential feelings and attitudes is stimulated by the symbolic language, and how inadequately it can be expressed through an elaboration of formulated and organized ideas.«⁹⁴

He also indicates the impossibility of paraphrase in his discussion of obscurities and intricacies to be found in Eliot's poetry: »In parts of the

⁸⁷ *Experience into Words*, p. 9.

⁸⁸ »The Literary Critic,« p. 638.

⁸⁹ *Experience into Words*, p. 33.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹³ »William Blake,« in *From Blake to Byron*, p. 74.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

later poems Eliot's 'meaning', what he intends his words to do, is so complex and difficult that direct explicit statement is ruled out.⁹⁵ Moreover, writing of »Burnt Norton,« he concludes that it is simply a linguistic creation:

»One could say, perhaps, that the poem takes the place of the ideas of 'regret' and 'eternity'. Where in ordinary speech we should have to use those words, and hope by conversational trial-and-error to obviate the grosser misunderstandings, this poem is a newly created concept, equally abstract but vastly more exact and rich in meaning. It makes no statement. It is no more 'about' anything than an abstract term like 'love' is about anything; it is a linguistic creation. And the creation of a new concept, with all the assimilation and communication of experience that that involves, is perhaps the greatest of linguistic achievements.«⁹⁶

Last but not least, his attempt to enunciate the matter of the poem in terms of some human experience seems to reflect also his twofold interest: first, in the verbal process of creation, that is, in how words emerge from experience, and second, the corollary interest in the possibilities and conditions under which the experience embodied in the poem is available to the reader. In this preoccupation, his literary and psychological knowledge appears combined. He often asks and tries to answer questions about the complex relationship of experience and words that no one has raised before in quite the same manner.

His attempts to analyze and describe the way poets apply language to incipient thought and to pinpoint the various ways in which experience and words interact and thus fuse together, can be traced in several of his essays. It is manifest as early as his first essay on Isaac Rosenberg, published in 1935 under the title »Aspects of the Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg.«⁹⁷ Here Professor Harding demonstrates that the usual metaphor describing the process of finding words to express a thought by »clothing a thought in language«, would be misleading if applied to Rosenberg's poetry, because the latter appears to spring more directly from the poet's own experience:

»He — like many poets in some degree, one supposes — brought language to bear on the incipient thought at an earlier stage of its development. Instead of the emerging idea being racked slightly so as to fit a more familiar approximation of itself, and words found for *that*, Rosenberg let it manipulate words almost from the beginning, often without insisting on the controls of logic and intelligibility.«⁹⁸

Professor Harding concludes that much of the labour that Rosenberg put in for writing was devoted to making his complex ideas intelligible without sacrificing their complexity. That is why Professor Harding states that »Rosenberg rarely or never illustrated his ideas by writing; he reached them through writing.«⁹⁹

Similar close interconnection between experience and words can be found in his analysis of some of Blake's writings: »The likelihood that

⁹⁵ *Experience into Words*, p. 107.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁹⁷ Published in *Scrutiny*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (March 1935): 358—69.

⁹⁸ »Aspects of the Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg,« p. 365.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

they were not *records* of psychological struggles but to a great extent the form in which the struggles found expression while they actually occurred helps to explain their obscurity and inconsistencies.«¹⁰⁰

In Shelley's poetry, however, he focuses his attention on some possible effects of the lacking logical control:

»The relatively greater emphasis that he places on the emotional states than on the more precise and checkable ideas in which they issue can lead to thinness and confusion, but can at times give lines of remarkable and satisfying complexity. Some of the stanzas towards the end of the long, high-pitched course of *Adonais* illustrate well how his mind worked.«¹⁰¹

In Shelley's manner of pouring out »emotionally-toned and sometimes only half-formulated ideas« Professor Harding finds a suggestion of »the use of language for as direct as possible an expression of emotional states, dependent as little as possible upon intellectual analysis and ordering.«¹⁰² Consequently, he comes to the following conclusion: »In Shelley's poetry, discursive thought does little or nothing to bring more order into his emotional states than they had already achieved in their pre-verbal existence.«¹⁰³

Writing about the obscurities in Eliot's poetry, he clearly indicates his own awareness of the fact »that much still remains to be understood about the non-discursive forms of mental organization and how far they can be independent of an implied discursive scaffolding.«¹⁰⁴ This awareness, however, does not prevent him from trying to develop a challenging synthesis of the relatively scarce knowledge of the psychophysical processes preceding the completion of linguistic structure; and neither does he refrain from dealing with certain connections between experience and words. These problems are presented in his paper »The Hinterland of Thought.«¹⁰⁵ Experience and language are here related as two simultaneously active sides of the process of verbalizing:

»On the one hand human experience includes an infinite variety of shades and patterns of feeling, attitude, desire, interest and discrimination. On the other hand language provides a vast range of subtle ways by which to refer to such experiences. When we speak or write, experience in some way merges with, and emerges in the form of, patterns of language. But in some minds the language processes reflect not only the main experience, in statements that could be more or less paraphrased, but also much subtler features of the non-verbal experience, and features of which the writer may have no awareness except through the overtones of what he finds himself writing. Even then he may well fail to notice what he has said.«¹⁰⁶

At the present level of the development of knowledge in this field, the creative writers seem to Professor Harding to

¹⁰⁰ »William Blake,« in *From Blake to Byron*, p. 80.

¹⁰¹ »Shelley's Poetry,« in *From Blake to Byron*, pp. 214—15.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 218—19.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹⁰⁴ *Experience into Words*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁵ Published in L. C. Knights and Basil Cottle, eds., *Metaphor and Symbol: Proceedings of the Twelfth Symposium of the Colston Research Society* (London: Butterworths Scientific Publications, 1960), pp. 10—23.

¹⁰⁶ *Experience into Words*, p. 187.

»... provide examples of nominally discursive statement which shows on inspection some of the characteristics of presentational symbolism and at times traces of a richer matrix, perhaps more confused, perhaps more complex, from which their words and images have emerged.«¹⁰⁷

It is thanks to remarkable responsiveness and insight into the words, their interaction and shades of meaning, that he succeeds in offering an interesting view of some aspects of precognitive ordering of incipient thought in his discussion of the poetry of Blake, Shelley, Eliot and Rosenbergs, thus establishing a route to the study of literature that has never been considered before.

The enunciation of the matter of the poem in terms of some possible human experience at the same time provides the description of the experience available to the reader, and thus — in a way — furnishes also the metaphorical meeting-ground of the reader and the author. Professor Harding insists that despite the inevitable individual differences in reading, a large nucleus of the poem must be »public property, with an intelligible meaning agreed about by those readers whose capabilities bring the poem potentially within their reach,« or else »the bond between author and reader and between one reader and another« is lost.¹⁰⁸ On the basis of his observation, he concludes that »understanding in the reader and intelligibility in the author are essential to a literature and involve obligations in both.«¹⁰⁹ In order to guide and control the reader's response, the writer

»... can offer only the verbal component of a pattern of inner experience the totality of which includes much else besides words and articulate thought. The reader reconstructs from the verbal component as much as he can of the rest of the pattern. ... In complex verbal language, conventions, associations and context interact with incalculable intricacy and subtlety to allow us to reconstruct from the verbal fragment a large part of the unspoken pattern. The question for intelligibility, in literature or speech, is whether enough of the verbal component of the author's experience has been given and whether it is effectively enough articulated with the rest of the experience to guide a competent reader in the direction the author intends. ...«¹¹⁰

The awareness of the reader's and the critic's possible misunderstandings and inadequate expectations that may prevent the successful reading of a poem is evident in several of Professor Harding's essays. It comes to expression in many forms, depending on the poetry and its particular aspect discussed, and on his own wide-ranging knowledge of contemporary critical achievements and reader's capacities. His analyses of reader's possibilities, however, are consistently orientated towards helping the reader to achieve a more accurate and more complex appreciation of the work in question. Thus in »The Rhythmical Intention in Wyatt's Poetry«¹¹¹ he examines the possible detrimental effects of the readings by meter-habituated critics and tries to indicate the possibilities of a more complex pleasure

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 173.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹¹ Published in *Scrutiny*, XIV (1946): 90—102.

emanating from a close observation of Wyatt's rhythmical structure, which for this reason should not be improved on but rather followed attentively. When discussing the poetry of T. S. Eliot, he pays special attention to the origins and effects of obscurity and uncertainty of meaning,¹¹² and in this way helps the readers to approach Eliot's poetry »with appropriate expectations,«¹¹³ meaning that they should not look for clear and paraphrasable meanings as these are not to be found in his poetry. Further, he warns the readers of unnecessary frustrations resulting from such wrong expectations. Again, writing on Shelley, Professor Harding detects a possible reason for the readers' misunderstandings of Shelley's syntax:

»But the impression of unreason sometimes comes from the reader's failure to cope with the elliptical structure of Shelley's sentences and the sheer difficulty of grasping his sense, with the consequent temptation to suppose that he had none and was content with mere incantation.«¹¹⁴

Elucidating the differences between emblem and symbol, he touches on the problems of the reader's understanding of symbols and especially warns him against the danger of his private projections.¹¹⁵

In »Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen,«¹¹⁶ he calls the reader's attention to some important statements whereby Jane Austen expressed her critical attitude towards the society of her time, an attitude that must have passed unnoticed or misread by her contemporaries. Analyzing such statements, he focuses on the complexity of her attitude and accordingly suggests a different emphasis in the reading of her works. In his »Introduction« to *Persuasion*,¹¹⁷ however, he points out that modern minds may well be more interested in the clash of values than in Jane Austen's traditionally recognized achievements; therefore they should attempt to realize a more complex meaning.¹¹⁸ Professor Harding here also investigates the conditions under which »embodied and given life in the social realities of her own period, Jane Austen's satire still has currency in ours.«¹¹⁹ He observes that the sense of the past needed in reading *Persuasion* is less important than the reader's sensitivity to equivalent contemporary phenomena:

»... the ability to notice the people and the institutions of our own time on which her eye would have rested and her judgement been passed, and this means recognizing contemporary equivalents rather than seeking identities.«¹²⁰

¹¹² *Experience into Words*, pp. 104—5.

¹¹³ »The Literary Critic,« p. 637.

¹¹⁴ »Shelley's Poetry,« in *From Blake to Byron*, p. 210.

¹¹⁵ *Experience into Words*, p. 84.

¹¹⁶ Published in *Scrutiny*, VIII (1940): 346—62.

¹¹⁷ Pp. 7—26 in the volume he also edited, viz. *Jane Austen: »Persuasion« with A Memoir of Jane Austen by J. E. Austen-Leigh* (Penguin English Library series. Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin, 1965).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

IV.

The study of Professor Harding's literary criticism and of some of his related writings has clearly shown that his criticism is never self-sufficient nor self-validating but rather always tries to serve some broader purpose: it concentrates on those elements and aspects of the work under discussion which can facilitate the spontaneous response of the reader of today, and contribute to the development of his alert and active mind. In order to realize this purpose, his criticism is orientated towards helping the reader to perceive the work more finely: to see its previously neglected aspects and unnoticed elements, hidden detail, underlying rhythmical structure, intricate themes, and the relationship between the illuminated elements and the work considered in its entirety. Professor Harding is certain that this is the only way to increase the reader's understanding and enjoyment of literary works and, in the long term, to develop his skill of enjoying literature.

He himself believes that the critic's giving the reader »opportunity and incentive to read more effectively for himself is one test of the critic's usefulness to the reader.«¹²¹ His own criticism can safely be said to stand this test at all times.

We should also note that his preoccupation with initiating the reader into better reading derives at least some of its force from his own research in reader response (his theory of reader response will be studied separately), from his profound knowledge of the rhythmical possibilities of language, and from his extensive knowledge of psychology.

Unconcerned with inventing sophisticated terms and labels¹²² or devising complex systems by way of elaborate methods, Professor Harding simply believes in the importance of literature for man and therefore tries to contribute to the presentation — and thereby dissemination — of this importance, to make it tangible by revealing the possible significance of individual works and authors. He does not think it advisable nor necessary to separate the study of literature from other concerns of life. Believing that »we are inescapably social,«¹²³ he regards literature as a basically social institution.

His attempts to formulate the matter of the poem — what the poet is talking about — in terms of some salient human experience can ultimately be seen as an original description of the significance literature can have for man. With his emphasis on what is represented in the work rather than on the mode of depiction (the latter coming only as a secondary interest), his criticism seems to relate literary works to the flux of ordinary life in a way that is more complex and acceptable than the traditional mimesis theoreis. He has abundantly proved that such a revelation of the significance of literature can make both older and recent literary works

¹²¹ »The Literary Critic,« p. 637.

¹²² Professor Harding is rather distrustful of abstract concepts, and that is why before introducing or using one, he always makes sure, at considerable length, that it is clear what the term used means in the context. Cf. for instance *Experience into Words*, p. 72, and *Words into Rhythm: English Speech Rhythm in Verse and Prose* (The Clark Lectures, 1971—1972. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 1—5.

¹²³ *Experience into Words*, p. 165.

available and attractive to the contemporary reader. Moreover, his approach can surpass the limitations of individual styles and genres, and he has used it successfully for all forms of literature.

Professor Harding's criticism is generally characterized by a remarkable coherence of tone and theme. He has succeeded in achieving this quality thanks to his efforts to enunciate the matter of the work discussed in terms of some salient human experience (the efforts that proceed from the implied premise that literature is important to man), his constant interest in the interaction of experiences and words, and his acute responsiveness to the language of literature.

Written over a period spanning almost fifty years (1933—81) and dealing with various authors and diverse genres, his essays and reviews thus possess the unity of purpose that is only rarely found in other contemporary critics. Some of his analyses are truly unparalleled in thoroughness and detail, and they have deservedly become an indispensable part of the understanding of the author or work that he has deemed worthy of discussion.

(Will be continued)

1933 *Review of the Mind* by I. A. Richards. *Quarterly Journal of Psychology*, 1 (1933), 208-10.

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1944 *Review of the Mind* by I. A. Richards. *Quarterly Journal of Psychology*, 1 (1933), 208-10.

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1946 *Review of the Mind* by I. A. Richards. *Quarterly Journal of Psychology*, 1 (1933), 208-10.

1947 *Review of the Mind* by I. A. Richards. *Quarterly Journal of Psychology*, 1 (1933), 208-10.

1948 *Review of the Mind* by I. A. Richards. *Quarterly Journal of Psychology*, 1 (1933), 208-10.

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