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*Abstract.* Shifting our critical perspective on *Sweeney* to encounter it temporally rather than spatially (New Critically), we discover an existential content embodied in an “Anti-Aristotelian” form remarkably similar to the drama of the absurd. Its thematic pattern is that which finds its paradigm in the myth of the Furies and its most articulate phenomenological description in Heidegger: the paradoxical flight from death and, ultimately, Nothingness (the *Erinyes*) that ends in the saving recognition that death is a benign agent (the *Eumenides*). The flight, characterized in existential philosophy as the self-deceptive “domestication” of death, is epitomized in the wastelanders’ effort to transform Sweeney’s tale of murder into a well-made detective story. But this impulse is thwarted by Sweeney’s refusal to draw a distancing conclusion. This becomes Eliot’s formal strategy. Like the Anti-Aristotelian absurdists, he “decomposes” the “time-shape” of his microcosm to prevent the audience from objectifying the dreadful contingency of the world of his play. Eliot’s Anti-Aristotelianism, however, is ultimately different from that of the “humanistic” absurdists. Whereas the latter project an absolutely discontinuous “time-shape” grounded in a vision of a radically discontinuous universe, Eliot, who sees the macrocosm as a Nothingness that may be the obverse of Somethingness, projects a discontinuous (circular) “time-shape” that contains the possibility of linear direction. (WVS)

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*Abstract.* In *Walden* and his other mature writings Thoreau often approaches the social problem of poverty not through the directly assertive rhetoric of the Transcendentalist reformers, but by associating certain poor men with the Aristotelian quality of “greatness of soul.” This American, democratic, magnanimous hero lives quietly close to nature, but he is “a prince in disguise,” reincarnating “the worthies of antiquity,” the gods and heroes of classical mythology and history. *Walden* contains both a sharp awareness of how the Protestant ethic leads to economic hypocrisy in the New Englander’s attitude toward the poor and a highly imaginative art of characterization, through which Thoreau transforms the innocent poor into heroes like those of contemporary American romances. But his political essays of the 1850’s, particularly those on slavery and the heroic revolutionary activities of John Brown, reveal the limitations of Thoreau’s art. His mythopoeic characterization of Brown comes too easily, emerging from a simplistic, abstract, merely polemical response to evil. “Magnanimity” becomes sheer brute force. Thoreau’s characters thus lack the dimension of tragic magnanimity; his account of Brown has none of the mysterious innocence of Melville’s Billy Budd, whose life and death present striking parallels to Brown’s. (TW)

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*Abstract.* In *Absalom, Absalom!*, as in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner’s concern is with the individual’s subjective apprehension of the palpable world of experience. In the latter novels he distinguishes one character’s point of view from another’s by means of significant variations in language and style in those sections which present a different individual consciousness. The distinction among the four narrative perspectives in *Absalom, Absalom!*, however, is not stylistic, but formal. Faulkner differentiates the viewpoints in the novel by shaping each perspective after a different literary genre. It is a skillful adaptation of form to meaning, for the selection of these particular genres expresses, structurally, the imagination’s subjective act of re-creating history, engaged in by four narrators emotionally involved in either Thomas Sutpen or the Southern myth: Rosa Coldfield, haunted by the

moral "outrage" inflicted by the "demonic" Sutpen, shapes her narrative to the Gothic mystery; Mr. Compson, convinced of the epical proportions of the South, relates his narrative as a Greek tragedy; Quentin, obsessed by Henry's relationship with Judith because of his own involvement with Caddy, presented in *The Sound and the Fury*, expresses his narrative in the framework of the chivalric romance; and Shreve, the detached, intellectual Northerner, relieves the intensity of the preceding viewpoints by means of the ludicrous humor of the tall tale. (LGL)

Pierre Reverdy, Poet of Nausea. By ROBERT W. GREENE. . . . . 48

*Abstract.* The image of collapse or implosion which dominates Reverdy's poetry and haunts the climactic section of *La Nausée* is glossed in the concluding pages of Sartre's novel and in various parts of Camus's *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. All three men focus on the experience of the absurd, on the malaise that accompanies the fleeting awareness of the contingency of all things, a feeling that is often triggered by the perception of abrupt decline or dissolution. This existentialist malaise or nausea, which terrifies Sartre's hero Roquentin, is in fact the very stuff of Reverdy's poetry and as such it demoralizes his readers. At the same time, however, Reverdy's poetry is deeply satisfying. Its ultimate appeal can perhaps best be understood in the light of Roquentin's final decision to face up to his nausea and to purify it in a lasting form such as a work of literature. It is precisely this solution to the problem of the absurd that Reverdy had intuited at the beginning of his career in 1915. Indeed, his life's work as a poet amounts to a sustained effort to confront the absurd and neutralize it in poetic form. (RWG)

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*Abstract.* Studying the structure of *Platero y Yo* makes explicit the organization and arrangement of expressive material as a unified whole. Why does *Platero* begin the way it does and why does it end the way it does? What are the inner principle or principles that tie together the various lyric chapters into a poetic unity? Several key patterns of imagery and events provide clues to the structure and meaning of *Platero*: the butterfly imagery which presides over the beginning and the ending of the work, occurrences of gratuitous bloodletting in the season of spring, the almost imperceptible disappearance of conditioned violence in the season of winter, the death of Platero in the month of February, the juxtaposition of life and death, violence and harmony throughout the entire work. All of these patterns and events are endowed with full symbolic significance by the seasonal cycle and by the theme of death and rebirth as a process of metamorphosis. (MPP)

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other by being set in opposition to the law of nature and (through a parallel with suicide) to conscience and Christian doctrine. Though Hamlet never abandons his commitment to unlimited retribution, he manages to palliate it by appealing from conscience and charity, first to the code of honor, and then, having come to think of himself as a doomed scourge of God, to divine command as a fiat superseding moral reason. These appeals lead up to Hamlet's ultimate reconciliation of conscience with divine fiat, and mark a steady spiritual decline from which he is rescued, through no merit of his own, by the brief madness of his final burst of anger. (HS)

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*Abstract.* There are three categories of myth in *Paradise Lost*, each of which is essential to the epic's proleptic structure: first, those myths identifying the pagan gods with the fallen angels; second, those myths used in comparisons with Eden, Adam, and Eve; finally, in Book XI, those myths that are types of the Old and New Testament revelation that Adam will receive. The first and third categories are evidences of God working in history, and these myths are consequently "fabled," set in story form by the pagans; the second group have no historical reality and are only "feigned," or fabricated. Milton uses these two words carefully. From another perspective, the first and second uses lead from the timelessness of prelapsarian existence to history. The third moves in reverse, from history to eternity, not of the world before the Fall but of the Christian glory to come. (JHC)

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*Abstract.* The poetic method of Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* is to demonstrate how wit can operate, through imagery, as both controlling and creative power. The poem's imagery suggests the relatedness of all human endeavor, defines the special place of criticism, indicates standards of value. Images modify one another to achieve subtle effects, communicate complex and delicate judgments. The multiplicity of imagery is never random; it works by purposeful reinforcement. Even individual images supply poetic and philosophic density. Particularly important is the figure of the "good man" which emerges gradually through the poem, exemplifying a technique characteristic of much of Pope's poetry: the heightening of significant figures to emblematic proportions to exemplify the reality of key abstractions. The form as well as the content of Pope's imagery is important, with metaphors in general indicating more crucial connections than similes reveal. Pope, unlike such predecessors as Cowley, uses both metaphor and simile to convey a set of complicated paraphrasable ideas. He attempts to promulgate doctrine and to enjoin the proper feelings and beliefs about it. The *Essay on Criticism* indicates that metaphor can provide organization without comprising the sole substance of a poem. (PMS)

Matthew Arnold's Tragic Vision. By JOHN P. FARRELL . . . . . 107

*Abstract.* In spite of his commitment to the classical tradition, Matthew Arnold saw tragedy not as man's violation of a supernal order, but as his victimization by a historical order. Arnold's essay on Lord Falkland, rather than the 1853 Preface, provides us with our most useful guide to his understanding of the tragic experience. In "Falkland" Arnold explicitly indicates that history becomes a tragic action in epochs of revolution when civilized life breaks down into a clash between a superannuated orthodoxy and a banal radicalism. In such periods, gifted individuals are left to wander, hopelessly, between two worlds. Four important works are informed by this vision. *Empedocles on Etna* shows that the protagonist's crisis is precipitated by the isolation Empedocles suffers in a world dominated by superstition on the one hand and sophistry on the other. "Lucretius" was to have used a similar background, the revolutionary clash between the conservative "Milonians" and the

democratic “Clodians.” In *Balder Dead* Arnold turned to the myth of the Twilight of the Gods in order to dramatize the theme of “Falkland.” Finally, the heroine in *Merope* is forced to choose between the barbarism of the old order and the nullity of the new one. (JPF)

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