

Thrills and Frills

ALSO BY ANDREW CROZIER

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ALSO BY IAN BRINTON

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Andrew Crozier

*Thrills
and
Frills*

Selected Prose

Edited by Ian Brinton

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Introduction

Almost without exception the prose of Andrew Crozier—reviews and articles centred upon the close reading of poetry, including fearless debate about the importance of some figures who have either been overlooked by the establishment or given little more than a cursory nod of acknowledgement—has been out of print for far too long. The work, often published in journals or as contributory chapters to other books, has never before been collected together and this seems astonishing. In a letter sent to me in 2006, when I was first formulating the idea of editing a selection of Crozier's work, Michael Schmidt wrote of his admiration for the prose: "He is a magnificent critic, moving with the certainty of a glacier, gathering everything." This echoes the comments Schmidt made to Crozier himself in a letter of July 2006 when he affirmed "the highest regard possible for your critical essays" and suggested that they "dig far deeper and uncover far more than most of the critical writings of writers I admire in our generation." A fuller account of this correspondence can be found in the introduction to *An Andrew Crozier Reader* which Carcanet published in 2012. In that introduction there is also a substantial quotation from a letter written to me, concerning the work on Harry Roskolenko which Crozier was most preoccupied with at the earliest stage of his all-too-brief retirement. This Shearsman collection of prose contains the first publication of that work as well as the full book proposal which Crozier provided for Cambridge University Press for a full-length study of 'The Fate of Modernism', a reappraisal of the British poetry of the 1940s. It also contains the full texts of the essays on Basil Bunting and Louis Zukofsky which Crozier had suggested to me at some point "should be amalgamated".

I see this book as very much a companion piece to the already published *Reader* and because of that I have not reproduced the prose which already exists in that book, such as the substantial article on Roy Fisher's *A Furnace*, the essay on George Oppen's early poetry and 'Resting on Laurels', the contribution to a Routledge compilation of essays *British Culture of the Postwar: An Introduction to Literature and Society 1945-1999*. Neither have I repeated the excellent bibliography which Derek Slade helped me to compile for that book.

It is very important to acknowledge debts and this book could not have been put together without the assistance of Jean Crozier, who gave me

unfettered access to Andrew Crozier's papers, my wife Kay who has been ever-patient about my being closeted in the study, and Tony Frazer whose enthusiasm for the project has never been in doubt. My thanks also go to Michael Schmidt whose enthusiasm for the *Andrew Crozier Reader* got the whole venture off the ground and whose belief in the immense value of Crozier's work proved a starting point for me: it permitted me to enter a world that is central to any real understanding of what was happening in the field of modern poetry from the late Sixties onwards.

Hope and Distrust

This article appeared in *PN Review* 88, 19.2, November/December 1992.

“It will have happened to that other / The survivor”
(George Oppen, ‘The Occurrences’)

“The harm that history does us / Is grievous but not final”
(Donald Davie, ‘Wild Boar Clough’)

If what makes a poem memorable includes the memory of its first reading then I can think of a number of poems by Donald Davie that belong to that category: ‘Homage to John L. Stephens’, for example, in *Events and Wisdoms*; or ‘Emigrant, to the Receding Shore’, in Robin Skelton’s *Memorial Symposium* for Herbert Read; or ‘Wild Boar Clough’, in *Three for Water Music*. More recently, in 1985, there was ‘Recollections of George Oppen in a Letter to a Friend’, in the *London Review of Books*, but this poem is memorable for the shock with which it left me speechless, “and with a sort of fury”, as I re-read those lines, and then read to the end of the poem, in a spirit of offended repudiation.

Poetic Justice

I swear made her appearance in a toga.
Alzheimer’s, yes—the diagnosis was
all very well, but surely George’s dealings
with language had for years anticipated,
almost provoked, the visitation? Such
pains as he had been at—in verse, in prose,
in conversation—to subvert, discount,
derange articulation. Destiny
strikes, and for months before he dies
he’s inarticulate. A hideous justice.

If there is a dividing line between shocking and offensive behaviour—and among other things Davie’s poem concerns itself with manners and behaviour, and Anglo-American differences (in *Collected Poems* the ‘Friend’ becomes an ‘English friend’)—then I think that Davie’s lines are shocking, but deliberately so because he has a serious topic in view,

in which he feels closely concerned. But it is an unrelenting critique of Oppen, which “hideous justice” is surely not intended to mitigate. Yet it is also ingenuous as a mode of advocacy, and those readers of Oppen who find that he speaks to them will think that Davie has tipped the balance by a shameless play on words. Although Davie backs away from “playing God like this” the judgement is not subsequently reversed, so that, if the reader is not to register only the shocking effect of those lines, to feel them always out of context, it is important to discover what it is that engages Davie so closely, as though it has caught him off his guard.

It is an error to see justice visited on the sick; as a student of the 18th Century Davie will know this very well. In our own century we know that whatever the statistical probabilities when it comes to cases nemesis strikes by chance. But if Swift did not deserve to expire “a Driv’ler and a Show”, the aetiology of his disease might, we can suppose, furnish a history for linguistic analysis. In ‘Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances’ Roman Jakobson cites the case of the Russian novelist Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky to correlate speech disorder and literary style.

His first name and patronymic, *Gleb Ivanovich*, traditionally combined in polite intercourse, for him split into two distinct names designating two separate beings: Gleb was endowed with all his virtues, while Ivanovich, the name relating the son to the father, became the incarnation of all Uspensky’s vices. The linguistic aspect of this split personality is the patient’s inability to use two symbols for the same thing, and is thus a similarity disorder. Since the similarity disorder is bound up with the metonymical bent, an examination of the literary manner Uspensky had employed as a young writer takes on a particular interest.

Theoretical expectations are borne out: analysis of Uspensky’s style reveals that he had “a particular penchant for metonymy, and especially for synecdoche”. Jakobson does not say that Oedipal conflict involves a predisposition to the realist novel, but will say that “the personal stamp of Gleb Ivanovich made his pen particularly suitable for this artistic trend in its extreme manifestations and finally left its mark upon the verbal aspect of his mental illness”. The formula might be that Oedipal conflict plus metonymic bent leads to split personality: unable to reconcile his virtues and his vices Uspensky displaces them by metonymic attribution. Who can say? The point to remember is that in Jakobson’s classification of two

types of aphasic disturbance similarity disorder is “bound up” with the metonymical bent by antithesis: relations of contiguity persist while those of similarity lapse. Contiguity disorder is, conversely, bound up with the metaphorical bent.

At this point Davie’s candid reader might hasten to interject that his poem does not refer in general terms to speechlessness or aphasia. Do not its more specific terms “articulation” and “inarticulate” indicate contiguity disorder in Oppen’s case? Is not Jakobson’s theory, indeed, precisely what we need to take Davie’s point? There are several objections to this. In the first place, Jakobson’s main bearing on what is being discussed is to shift its ground from justice to disease. Beyond that, we should be sceptical about attempts to take the terms he borrows from rhetoric to denote the two axes of linguistic relations and bend them back into literary criticism with the same binary logic. And finally, the word “inarticulate” is used of speakers in a very loose sense; its relation to “articulation”, in the rather special sense we associate with Davie, involves a deliberate play on words. It is precisely the support this wordplay provides for the figure of Justice, however quaintly garbed, that is so shocking when set beside the figure of the stricken poet. Speechless, aphasic, inarticulate: they can all mean the same thing. The painful details of human affliction deserve respect: it would be impertinent to enquire more closely into the particulars of Oppen’s demented utterance.

Yet the charge against Oppen, that he was at pains “to subvert, discount, derange articulation” remains in place. Davie’s “articulation” and Jakobson’s “relations of contiguity” might be near enough the same thing, for purposes of description, and we might try to read Oppen, in the light of Davie’s charge and Jakobson’s theory, to see if his writing does reveal a metaphorical bent. This need not commit us to any headlong flight towards medical diagnosis. But a glance at some of the very things Davie has noted in Oppen, as we will see, is enough to show that theory will not bear out the charge. Oppen’s proclivity for bald and disconnected statement (the ability to propositionalise depends on relations of contiguity), and his non-metrical verse (meter is a relation of similarity), already establish the presence to some degree of the metonymical process. This is not the place, however, to establish for Oppen’s verse the proportions of metaphorical and metonymical processes which, in “normal verbal behaviour”, says Jakobson, are both “continually operative”.

Nevertheless, if Jakobson’s theory will not account for Davie’s case against Oppen, it cannot discount it. But Jakobson has served to clear the

air in order to turn to Davie himself to establish in greater detail what the issue is between Oppen and articulation. Davie's 'Recollections' include very little reminiscence of Oppen; instead he is inserted in a history of reproach and self-reproach, distrust and self-distrust; it is, indeed, a rumination on vexing and unfinished business: "often as I have settled George's hash / to my own satisfaction / ...still he.../ won't go away, nor let me be, reproachful / as always the dead are"; "Not a bit / of help to me was George, or George's writing; / though he achieved his startling poignancies, / I distrusted them, distrust them still." Something of this history can be gathered from Oppen's *Selected Letters*, but more pertinent to the topic of articulation is Davie's review of Oppen's *Seascape: Needle's Eye*, 'Braveries Eschewed'. The charge that Oppen subverts, discounts, or deranges articulation is here referable to his "suppression" of punctuation, although the point is made in relation to "obscurity", and although this is one of several observations made by Davie to place Oppen before an "oldfashioned reader", the points he makes are brought together finally in an argument in which "articulation in and of the marvel that is human language" is axiomatic of any achieved rhetoric, Oppen's included.

Not much to argue with there, it might be thought, indeed Davie quickly says that his argument is not "with Oppen or with Oppen's poems". But he has already stated the corollaries of the "shabby argument" against which his confessedly "lack-lustre phrase", "the marvel that is human language", was advanced.

If we truly want or need to cut loose from our inherited past, then we should discard not just poetic figurations of language but any figurations whatever, including those which make it possible to communicate at all, except by grunts and yelps.

The argument comes in two parts, and needs to be considered in two ways. If we attend to the argument as a whole it is apparent that its two parts are combined in the word "inherited": we cannot pick and choose amongst our inheritance, but must accept it as a job lot. What this means in terms of language is that if we reject poetic figurations (the "braveries" of Davie's title) we must reject words and the rules of grammar as part of the bargain. The weakness of this argument is that it makes no distinction between a specific set of "traditional splendours and clarities" ("our inherited past") and the structure of ("human") language generally. We might also remind ourselves that figures of grammar and figures of rhetoric, to use an old

distinction, are not to be seen as continuous, if we are mindful of Jakobson's schema, but are in fact opposed. Quite possible to have one without the other. We can also, on the other hand, consider the two parts of Davie's argument separately, to see that the position attributed to Oppen only becomes a shabby argument if the inferences drawn from it are admitted within limits (the range of corollary figuration extends a long way down to grunts and yelps) and Oppen is found not to act in good faith. These points do tell against Oppen and will not dissolve into the "untenable positions [William Carlos] Williams's obtuseness trapped him into" appealed to by the admirers of Oppen Davie presents himself as arguing against.

But if all that remained at issue was that "all that is happening is that a new rhetoric is being preferred before an old one" the position attributed to Oppen would cease to be objectionable; he and Davie could agree to differ. But clearly more is at issue: the pitch of Davie's argument suggests that he feels coerced by Oppen's rhetorical practice; treat it as domestic or intimate as he may, it presents itself to him as historically overdetermined. It is not just that he sets out to rebut such arguments; at the start of his review he draws attention to Oppen's attempt to understand the present as an historian, and the act of willed choice by which he is closed to the past. Such a distinction between history and the past is valid in Davie's hands, its significance is evident in his poems, most notably the *Six Epistles to Eva Hesse*, and he is no doubt in the right to place Oppen as an historian in terms of the Marxism "in his background and his past". But it is surely wrong subsequently to ask "are we Marxist enough, historical determinists enough, to agree that the time is gone for so many of the traditional splendours and clarities as this poetry wants us to dispense with?" The association is wrong (only a historicist argument will enforce such abnegation—Marxists, in my understanding, see cultural production as mediated), and the question is falsely put, for it is addressed ambivalently to poet and reader alike. Nevertheless those braveries on behalf of which Davie appeals with such vivid eloquence belong to our past rather than to our place in history, and quite clearly the distinction between the past and history can underwrite different definitions of art.

It will also be clear by now that by "articulation" Davie means rather more than syntax (indeed he can include "fractured and disjointed language" within the articulation of rhetoric); that the term embraces the whole range of traditional poetic devices; and that this totality of effect belongs with an understanding of poetry's public role as fullness and range of utterance. It is also clear I think that it is articulation in this sense that

Oppen subverts, discounts, and deranges—it must be so if the verbs are deployed with precision, for these are ways of acting not on grammar so much as on the institutions of inherited tradition. But if this is so the relation between “articulation” and “inarticulate” becomes all the more remote, available only by means of the same ambiguous punning that enables Davie to assert that Oppen refuses the “traditional braveries... because they would testify... to a bravery (in the other sense) about his vocation and the art he practices”.

Before I return to Davie’s poem—it will be understood that the purpose of my discussion is to do it justice—something needs to be said about *Seascape: Needle’s Eye*. It cannot be assumed that either in his review or in his poem has Davie given a complete account of his reading of Oppen. It is only necessary to turn to his essay ‘English and American in *Briggflatts*’ to find him dealing with Oppen in very different terms. The contrast between Bunting’s “social and public note”, associated with normal punctuation which clarifies “the articulate structure of sentences”, and the “characteristically intimate and private” note of American Objectivists such as Oppen, reiterates, under different conditions, distinctions already met with. However, behind both the English Objectivist and his American peers Davie points to “a conviction that is wholesome”:

...that a poem is a transaction between the poet and his subject more than it is a transaction between a poet and his readers. This is to make the poet once again more than a rhetorician; and on this showing the reader, though the poet cannot be oblivious of his presence, nevertheless is merely “sitting in on” or “listening in to” a transaction which he is not a party to.

Backing this conviction (and here Davie is quoting Oppen) is “the necessity of form, the objectification of the poem”. As a transaction a poem is not at all the performance Davie, in ‘Braveries Eschewed’, insists against Oppen it must be. I draw attention to these other views of Davie’s as differences, not as contradictions; they are, surely, more in the nature of unresolved but productive antinomies. In order, finally, to approach Davie’s poem it is necessary to see it not in the light of his reading of Oppen but over against one’s own.

I will confine myself to just two points. The first is that Davie’s review of *Seascape: Needle’s Eye* is perplexingly out of character: it is Oppen’s most Poundian collection and yet Davie, of all critics, ignores this, so much so

that the references to Williams seem to be a blind. Not only do we hear Pound in his phrases (“glass sea shadow of water”, “the tide / brimming / in the moon-streak”), there are allusions to his work (“obstinate islands”), and in ‘Of Hours’ the figure of Pound is invoked on the occasion of a tense, belated reunion in 1979 (“why did I weep / Meeting that poet again what was that rage”). The second concerns the seventh of ‘Some San Francisco Poems’, which Davie takes as his warrant for the assertion that for Oppen both the past, and the past of art, are irrelevant, and here of course I shall not merely assert the contrary. I do suggest, however, that Davie’s distinction leads to a misreading of the poem, since history and the past need not be opposed in the way he suggests. They are brought together in Oppen’s poem in the figure of a wrecked Steinway piano, which serves both as a figure of a specific historical present (the history of our culture’s destruction of its own goods and inheritance) and as an emblem of cultural tradition (it is not, after all, a Yamaha electronic keyboard). The thing is both agent, motive, and effect.

The keyboard gone in the rank grass swept her hand
over the strings and the thing rang out

“Mr Steinway’s / Poem”, Oppen says, “Not mine”, and comments “A ‘marvellous’ object / Is not the marvel of things”. I think this comment lurks behind Davie’s phrase about “the marvel that is human language”; what precedes it is certainly the object of his cryptic remark that “no Mr Steinway manufactured the instrument, language, on which Oppen performs”. But I also think that Davie has not taken Oppen’s point. His distinction is between the poem as a found object and the poem as a modification and contextualisation of the object, but his point concerns things in general, as the groundwork for particular objects. And it is the groundwork which interests Oppen the more; in this (as I have argued elsewhere) he is fundamentally unlike Williams, as he has always been. And if indeed Oppen’s poem is also a marvellous object (as I think it is) it is not so *sui generis*. It is a poem grounded in the history of poetry in which the past can ring out as part of history.

My two points come together to find in Oppen a view of art (as both cultural inheritance and technical practice) which takes its measure more critically than does Davie in ‘Braveries Eschewed’ (where he suggests that Oppen’s poetry will not be able to help Californian youth ignorant of its past) but which is perhaps not very far from the view taken by Davie in

Czesław Miłosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric. By that I mean among other things that art is not the solution to our immediate problems. In ‘Of Hours’ Oppen, by means of his Janus-headed syntax, connects his response to Pound and his response to battle as a response to art: “...what was that rage // Before Léger’s art poster / In war time Paris”, and although rage is glossed in the comment “perhaps art / Is one’s mother and father”, it is striking that here the communist soldier responds to the communist artist as—under certain circumstances—irrelevant. Davie’s word is the one needed to state what is at issue. But this is not Oppen’s last word on the ethical bearing of life on art, and indeed the Oppen who fought in the Ardennes was closer to the political activist who had abandoned poetry as an irrelevance in the depression than to the poet of 1972. In place of the categorical irrelevance of art that poet proffers a discrimination of art based on an empirical test of truth, a fidelity to looking, touching, saying and loving: “Old friend old poet / If you did not look / What is it you ‘loved’”. That goes home to Pound, and it also grounds the empirical test in the self, not some grand ontological security. Oppen’s sense of “precariousness”, heightened we may be sure by the history of his own times, is figured throughout *Seascape: Needle’s Eye*, in ways which nevertheless acknowledge a debt to Pound, in terms of wind, water, and the durability of cultural products, but it is a poetry grounded in its own metaphysical enquiry.

Davie’s poem about Oppen consumes a great many braveries, and it is by their role in a textual economy of flagrancy that the shock of the lines I began by quoting can be absorbed. It invokes and parodies Coleridge’s ‘This Lime-tree Bower My Prison’ and, as in Coleridge’s poem, a friend named Charles is addressed. But if the site of Coleridge’s poem is wittily conjured up (Davie makes play with his ignorance of botanical names except as poetic appurtenances) the bower is reminiscently displaced, just as the poet’s self-communing is self-conscious and decentred. Nevertheless it is a poem (rather as Davie would have us see Oppen’s poems) intimately addressed to himself and another of Oppen’s friends, and must remain closed to readers who know nothing of Oppen’s poetry. Given such a restricted public Davie’s shocking lines are a hostage to fortune, indeed they brave the reception of the friend to whom Davie’s remarks are addressed, who is only implicated in conversational malice about Oppen to the extent of having joined in mockery of his style of public reading. But Davie’s description of this (“his unpretentious chuntering monotone / that could not mark where a poem began or ended”) will strike anyone who heard Oppen read by its accuracy. (Not that clear and varied enunciation is what Davie subsequently means by articulation.)

“Poetic Justice...in a toga” is another bravery, as is “playing God”, which erases the former—and this is surely to Davie’s credit—only after he has exposed himself to the risks that came in its train. But the supreme bravery, I want to suggest, is the figure Davie invents of Oppen himself: it is not the real person and social being, briefly recalled at the beginning of the poem, but the imaginary antagonist in Davie’s inward debate about poetry. A figure of Davie himself. It is as his “gaoler” that Davie’s recollections of Oppen warrant the co-option of Coleridge’s poem, but it is at this point that Davie deviates most remarkably from his predecessor, who was immobilised in consequence of some piece of domestic clumsiness, and this is marked, I think, by Davie’s subsequent quotation of lines 6-10 of Coleridge’s poem. For surely, in the context in which Davie is writing, the line “Friends, whom I never more may meet again”, denotes contingency rather than possibility. It is only beyond this point in the poem that Oppen is ushered securely into the past indicative, his shade laid to rest. At this point also a crisis has passed, and the poem is able to return to the bower and dell at Charles’ cottage in a fresh start.

What remains to be noticed is the poem’s termination in antithetical distrust and hope, which follows and confirms a harshly drawn self-portrait: “snapping branches of morose / inspirations, aspirations, habits / held up to the weak light, scowled at.” For while Davie distrusts Oppen’s poignancies he amply recognises his capacity for hope.

But hope, such hope he had, such politics
 always of hope! Hope is a strenuous business;
 I hope the roar of it enlivens your
 west-country dell, as a whisper of it mine.

The cadence at the end is very fine. To pitch hope against distrust is strenuous, even resolute, but nothing is resolved, nor can it be on account of the ligature between poignancy and Davie’s figuration of Oppen as *avant garde*—“Pathfinder”, “Trailblazer”—the role in which he returns as Davie’s antagonist. For Oppen’s poignancies, which Davie accords him in full measure in ‘Braveries Eschewed’, all the while measuring the cost by which they are obtained, must be distrusted if Davie reckons they have been paid for at too high a rate. How are poignancies paid for? What we find poignant must first have pierced us, wounded us. Does not Davie fear these poignancies (surely fear properly belongs with hope) as much as he distrusts them, and been pained by them? Is his distrust not

levelled, fearfully, at his own response? Perhaps I go too far. In Ronald Aaronson's *The Dialectics of Disaster: A Preface to Hope* the politics of hope begin with the person, as a kind of absurdity, and this is poignant indeed. For the figure of the avant garde Oppen we might substitute that of the survivor, for it is in narratives of survival that Oppen's hope is anchored, and in which, though wounded, the poignancy of old age and youth are discovered. And Davie's reader can propose this because his poem—and this is the bravery (in his second sense) in which it is grounded—invites dialogue and dissent by addressing the reader as the friend to whom he communicates his thoughts.

American Photography

Weston J. Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz, Fifty Pioneers of Modern Photography* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / The Viking Press, 1978, \$30.00. Pp. xiv, 530)

Harry W. Lawton and George Knox (eds.), *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre, Selected Critical Essays on Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers by Sadakichi Hartmann* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: Univ. of California Press, 1978, £15.00 / \$25.00. Pp. xvi, 364)

Walker Evans First and Last (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978, £14.95. Pp. vi, 204)

This review was published in the *Journal of American Studies*, 14.3,
December 1980.

Aesthetic exploitation of the machine is characteristic of American art (it was more than historical accident that brought Duchamp to New York for the successful realization of his career), and the aesthetics of photography, the mechanical art par excellence, has been the work of American pioneers since the end of the 19th Century. Photography should occupy a recognized position in American Studies, and these three books constitute as good an introduction as any to its complexities for a newcomer to the field. Each book is of value for itself, each deals with primary materials of photographic scholarship, yet taken together they also illustrate something of the confused state of photographic studies, for each exemplifies a different treatment of materials, the differences having less to do with adequacy or appropriateness of scholarship than with critical intention towards and conception of the very character of the object of study. Each, considered in the context of the other two, begs the questions, Why do we study photographs? What materials do we require in such a study? What editorial criteria should apply to the publication of historical material?

Alfred Stieglitz and Sadakichi Hartmann, contemporaries and, on occasion, collaborators, were arguably the chief American proponents of photography as fine art, Stieglitz not only by virtue of his own photographs, but also as a publisher and exhibition organizer, and Hartmann as critic and

theorist. Stieglitz was also, in the earlier stages of his career, an important collector of photographs, both by gift and purchase, and the greater part of his collection is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mr Naef's book is a work of great scholarly accomplishment, almost worth its price for the bibliography alone; its value is out of all proportion to the kind of utility the catalogue of a museum collection might normally be expected to afford. Not only does Mr Naef's book-length Introduction provide a fresh and exceptionally thorough account of Pictorialist and Secessionist photography, largely superseding earlier work by Robert Doty (*Photo-Secession*, Rochester, N.Y., 1960), it might also reasonably be claimed to be the single indispensable text for the study of Stieglitz's own work by virtue of the account it provides of the contexts in which his early photographs were made. Yet one crucial dimension is absent. Although the Stieglitz collection, which the catalogue illustrates in full, provides the occasion for an exemplary historical narrative, it contains no work by Stieglitz himself apart from studies of the nude made in collaboration with Clarence White, seen here in the context of White's other work in the collection. Mr Naef's brief being to catalogue and illustrate the collection, it is proper that he should stick to it, but there arises in consequence a possible imbalance between the two parts of the book, so that it needs to be used with a degree of circumspection. The collection cannot serve as an index to the style it illustrates, for not only is work by Stieglitz absent, it also includes neither the work of P. H. Emerson, the prototype of English pictorialism, nor, at the other end of the style's period, work by photographers such as Kertesz whose mature styles developed out of pictorialism. Mr Naef is not unaware of this discrepancy, and not the least interesting aspect of his Introduction is its analysis of the relationship of Stieglitz's collecting activities to other, more central, issues in his career: such questions as value (how to price a photographic print), coherence (what had a place in the collection), and quality (which photographers to represent in depth) all have a bearing on Stieglitz's attempts to professionalize photography, to define his own position in photographic history, and to establish appropriate aesthetic criteria for making and viewing photographs. Stieglitz's collection is, in fact, sufficiently arbitrary (he excluded the work of immediate predecessors), idiosyncratic (it includes works using techniques he abjured), and personally haphazard not to be eloquent on its own behalf, and its publication benefits from just such a commentary as Mr Naef's Introduction provides.

While the Stieglitz collection is undoubtedly an important historical document it is equally a major archival resource, and it might be suggested

that the publication of photographic archives unduly complicates the writing of photographic history. Why not, in effect, dismember the archive, treating it as a source of prints by major photographers such as Steichen and Coburn, and forget the work of such marginal figures as Anne W. Brigman and Harry C. Rubincam? The reason why not, in this case, is that as document rather than archive the collection ultimately reflects back on a figure of such major importance as Stieglitz. Mr Naef has managed to combine the roles of archivist and historian with immense tact, and has given us an essential book. The abundant writings on photography produced between 1898 and 1915 by Sadakichi Hartmann, much primarily occasional, some the product of critical reflection, scattered among a variety of journals and newspapers, present a not dissimilar occasion for the exercise of editorial tact and judgement. Is it possible to portray Hartmann the neglected historical figure, bohemian aesthete and journeyman critic, while at the same time assembling a cohesive body of writing by which to assess his practical and theoretical contribution to the history of photographic criticism? Are Hartmann's writings original documents, or do they rather uncover (as the editors argue, in the case of the Salon Club, they do) neglected areas of history? Too many of the essays collected in *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre* (a title which represents Hartmann at his worst) merely show how Hartmann squandered his talents in flattering attention to the provincial photographic club-world which doubtless constituted his primary readership; for Hartmann this kind of involvement may have been justified both as an educative ploy and as a means of scouting for new talent, and it accords with the democratic, Whitmanesque, strain in his outlook, but from the point of view of modern scholarship such material might find a more appropriate place in a study of the photographic sub-culture of the period. It is arguable, however, that Hartmann's relationship to the photographic community at large, the overall shapelessness of what he wrote, its frequent reactive impulse, all of which govern the coherence of his critical achievement, were as much determined by his problematic position vis-à-vis the metropolitan and cosmopolitan ambience generated around Stieglitz as by a need to write for money. It is noteworthy that Hartmann's important contributions to *Camera Work* belong to the opening and closing phases of the magazine's history; also that the absence of any reference to him in Mr Naef's book does not represent a glaring omission.

While Hartmann is credible as a critic of the Secession he is less so in his endorsement of what he wished to see as its possible alternative, and as a

mirror of his times he reflected much that was merely peripheral; it is hard not to feel in this respect he has been less than well served by his editors. Yet despite the dispersal of critical focus, the involvement in photography's political in-fighting, it is possible to discover from Hartmann's more considered writing a developing theory of photographic aesthetics, and a gradual working out of contradictions latent in the positions taken in his early criticism. Hartmann was always an advocate of the 'straight' photograph, and decried the use of studio props, and manipulations of the medium, by which a fine art status was sought by many photographers; but his arguments from the intrinsic qualities of the medium (the blurred tonal outline especially), and their suitability for the depiction of modern subjects, enclosed an aesthetic of the impression, of the pictorial as pre-existent in the natural or urban scene. His contempt for the strong tonal contrasts of primitive photography provided an aesthetic rationale for a previously edited sense of what made up "the pictorial beauties of life and nature," and misty or twilight atmospheres were valued agents for unifying the diverse features of a depicted scene in the cause of pictorial effect. Yet this attachment to unified picturesque effect provided the motive for most photographic manipulators. The route by which Hartmann subsequently came to envisage a way out of this contradiction, without abandoning his formal commitment to straight photography, although it stopped short of a recognition that photography might assume a documentary motive, anticipated new approaches to pictorial composition that would express the purposiveness of objects (in this he seems to look forward to some of Paul Strand's work), and involved a particular esteem for the street photography of Coburn and Stieglitz.

It is possible to trace in Hartmann a development, impelled perhaps by the individualist prejudice which caused him to look askance at an imitable style, from a provincial taste for the picturesque towards a recognition that straight photography was not a replication of how the eye sees, and that the photograph might constitute a new type of image, segmenting rather than synthesizing the world. Hartmann's strength as a writer on photography does not lie in a comprehensive theory (he had none), nor in the breadth of his views, but rather in his willingness to re-examine a limited number of ideas in the light of fresh evidence; he also can help us to see pictorial photography in the context of the more general visual aesthetic of its period. His editors' critical apparatus, on the other hand, is more often a hindrance than a help: exact information as to which illustrations they have supplied, and which originally accompanied Hartmann's writings, is

a major omission (did Hartmann really illustrate his brief remarks on the squalid picturesque with photographs by Jacob Riis?); the bibliography of Hartmann's writings involves a departure from the standard chronology, and is instead organized alphabetically, with an internal alphabetic subdivision according to the various names (including variant spellings) under which he wrote, all of which makes it both unnecessarily complicated and virtually impossible to use.

It is not at all clear whether the name of Walker Evans, who died in 1975, should be taken to establish authorship of *First and Last* or read as part of the book's title. If the motives of Hartmann's editors are incompletely resolved, in this case the editorial role is startlingly self-effacing. The photographs are handsomely reproduced, without captions, by the duotone process; there is a list of subjects, with dates, negative dimensions and, in some cases, details of ownership, at the back; the only other text (leaving aside for the time being what is printed on the dust jacket) is an anonymous Publisher's Note which, without doing so directly, presumably credits those responsible for the selection of Evans's work. This is not the first attempt to epitomize Evans's career, and judged simply as a picture book it is effective both as an illustration of the diversity of Evans's subject matter and as a demonstration of the direct sensuous pleasure photographs can provide. But the tone of pious self-effacement before a monument of pure art seems inauthentic. What about the photographs remaining of the 20,000 from which these 219 were so laboriously chosen? Does editorial labour, not to mention privileged intimacy with the complete oeuvre, confer value and authority? Are these Evans's best photographs? Do they constitute the best survey of his work as a whole? Don't these photographs, in fact, communicate more fully, when seen collectively, than they do when seen as a choice of individual images?

Evans has the historical distinction of being the first photographer to break with the Stieglitz tradition of the exhibitable fine print. Throughout his career the usual presentation of his work was through publication, in either a magazine or a book, often in conjunction with a collaborative prose text. Evans established for himself a convention, related to developments in camera technology, not of the individual image but the series of images, and it would be wrong-headed to argue that this was merely his expedient adaptation to economic circumstances. Evans is the master of the documentary segment, but there is a returning tension between his images and the margins which excise them from the continuum of the real world, while a similar tension is often generated within his images, both

in depth, plane surfacing behind plane, and laterally, where two planes converge at the corners of objects. Evans's aesthetic consistency is bound up with the consistency of his attention to particular subject matter, and his work requires to be seen in the context of the terms in which it was made—the motif, or location, examined in depth—and equally in terms of the way he presented it in publication. This argument might be taken further to suggest that seen on its own an Evans photograph is in danger of becoming an item of dated social reportage, and that his language is only fully articulate when relations are established between individual images. *First and Last* does lend itself to being read in this way, and it is undeniable that the book's format underwrites the sheer presence of Evans's images, but it is still at best no more than an addition to existing literature. The dust jacket blurb makes much of the claim that Evans's work has hitherto been largely misunderstood, but even were it to be conceded that his work has been in pawn to a 1930s cultural ethos of "social consciousness and political commitment," by withholding any indication of the situations in which the photographs were made and published those responsible for this book do not so much create the occasion on which Evans's work is allowed for the first time to speak for itself as impose on the actual qualities of the work an inappropriate notion of the self-adequate image. There is, in fact, an aura of commerce about the book, not so much by virtue of its affinity with the coffee-table genre (the price is actually quite modest for what it provides), as by an implicit sub-text which fosters the kind of immaculate and exclusive prestige on which the art market thrives.