

between the author and his republic displayed in Volume III are those which developed out of "Letter to His Countrymen" and his account, in *The History of the Navy*, of what happened at the Battle of Lake Erie. Volume IV is largely the record, in appropriate categories, of his jousts with various editors, although the concluding section has many letters devoted to the pitfalls of marketing fiction which reveal the man's characteristic inclination to interpret economic events as personal affronts.

The admirable procedure of the first two volumes is carried on in these two—a brief but sufficient introduction to each part, setting the background and summarizing the issues. Each letter is annotated, giving the source and other data and providing pertinent supplementary documents. With Volume IV, the letters total 786. Approximately 60 per cent of these are published in this edition for the first time—in itself a substantial physical contribution to American materials. If one may register a mournful complaint without seeming ungrateful for so much excellent editing, it is about the matter of indices. One index—of recipients—is affixed to each volume; but beyond that, a general index of persons would increase immensely the value of these letters for research. The final two volumes, with such an index for the complete work, can be expected to appear in the years ahead. Until then, someone in search of a particular reference, say Cooper's remarks about a certain European writer, will have miles to go before he sleeps—miles which Professor Beard and the Harvard University Press might have saved him.

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HAROLD ROSENBERG, *The Anxious Object: Art Today and its Audience*. 270 pp. illus. Horizon Press, 1964. \$7.50.

ALTHOUGH he sometimes goes far out of his way in order to pick an unnecessary fight with the academic art historians and critics who, I am sure, bear him none of the ill will he seems to feel, and who, indeed, will probably be only too happy to be corrected where their information is less accurate than his, Mr. Rosenberg is an extremely useful critic. He is, to my knowledge, the only writer to give us in one place a trustworthy account of what it has meant to be an avant-garde painter in New York in the last two and a half decades. This is not always a consistent book, and Rosenberg's own attitudes are disturbingly ambivalent. He repeatedly comes near to mocking what he crusades for. He is an admirer, most of all, of the action painters, though he feels that they have been badly misrepresented by writers who have striven to domesticize them by demonstrating the logic of abstract expressionism in terms of the history of west-

ern art since French Impressionism. In attacking such sympathetic critics, he often attacks their subjects as well.

He has a number of theses which we need to know if we are to understand what has been going on in painting. Some of them are brand new, while others are perfectly familiar to the critics and historians whom he attacks: "The decisive development in American art since the war . . . is that we now have our own art movements" (244), while in the past we have had for the most part merely a number of very good unaffiliated painters. Any art movement, even one "which has not expounded its approach . . . inspires in its followers a fairly uniform set of responses to the major determinants of style . . ." (237-38). The famous Armory Show "was The Great Event in the history of American art education rather than in the history of American art" (191). On the process by which academic art history becomes an influence upon painters as important as any other: "Art becomes valuable through creating the values by which it is valued" (26). On the related subject of the "Vanguard audience," which so strongly influences new art production, Mr. Rosenberg presents an impressive appraisal of the importance of "newness." Feeling that they should know and "understand" what avant-garde painters are doing, members of this audience steep themselves in the writings of museum directors and academic critics. To deal with the new situation, Rosenberg says we need terms to relate new paintings to "the *novelty* in the art that preceded them. The problem is whether such judgments will have time to take hold before the next wave of novelty breaks" (235). If I may be permitted to offer a suggestion based on my own work with elite audiences, I would say that behind what Mr. Rosenberg has accurately observed is the fact that the "Vanguard audience" is itself very new to elite arts; in a fluid society, aesthetes become aesthetes through a process of self-education. And since even very traditional elite art is brand new to the members of this audience, their response is from the start different from that of an aesthete born, so to speak, to the cloth. Indeed, the pressure for newness is ultimately the result of the demands of the audience. Since people new to the arts are to some extent surprised by everything, and then find explanations so that they can understand what it is all about, "surprise and explanation" is the pattern they continue to expect from art. Mr. Rosenberg's suggestion that we devise an aesthetic based upon this pressure for novelty is an extremely fruitful idea, although it is not really new in the American arts. Poe, who perhaps more spectacularly than any of our other artists felt the uncertainty of being a newcomer to the arts, was, as one might expect, also the first of our artists to suggest an aesthetic which found an important place for novelty. The

facts which Mr. Rosenberg records document this thesis. Having for the first time produced an art movement of our own, legitimately based in creative traits of the American personality, and having succeeded, especially in the eyes of Europeans, in displacing Paris as the center of avant-gardism in the world of painting, we have promptly turned to a full-scale attack on this highly successful school through such forces as Pop Art, Op Art and the propaganda for the New Realism.

Besides essays on the force of art history, on the reasons behind Pop Art, abstract expressionism and "newness," this book also contains excellent discussions of individual painters: Arshile Gorky, Willem DeKooning, Hans Hofmann, Saul Steinberg, Barnett Newman and Jasper Johns. It is a valuable contribution to our sense of what's going on. Better than any other writer today, Rosenberg gives us the feel of the artist's boots in the frustrating and inconsistent art world in which "the value of the new is measured not by pre-established standards but by the genuineness of the novelty and the possibilities to which it gives rise" (233-34).

STUART LEVINE, *University of Kansas*

DANIEL LEVINE, *Varieties of Reform Thought*. xiii, 149 pp. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1964. \$3.00.

ALTHOUGH the discovery that the reformers of the Progressive Era were a varied lot is not so original as Mr. Levine appears to believe, it is nonetheless useful to have this study of some of the diverse approaches to reform.

Levine chooses six examples to illustrate his point. Jane Addams emphasized the unity of mankind, whom she saw as essentially good, while Samuel Gompers accepted class conflict and sought to exploit it for the benefit of his fellow workers. The Civic Federation of Chicago wanted "social stability and order through rule by the enlightened few." Albert J. Beveridge was not so much interested in reform itself as he was in a centralized nation run by a powerful and efficient government. Edgar Gardner Murphy, a less-well-known southern Progressive, looked for an elite of intelligence and character to balance the wild swings of a too-democratic society, while Robert M. La Follette had no fear of the widest possible extension of democracy because of his confidence in the rationality of man.

Levine finds that none of the current generalizations about the Progressives fits this heterogeneous group, and concludes that "the best answer to the question, what did American reformers think about the nature of man and of society is: 'They disagreed.'"

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