

# REVIEWS

*An introduction to the principles of transformational syntax.* By A. Akmajian and F. Heny. Pp. xii + 419. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1975.

Reviewed by Roland Sussex, University of Melbourne.

This new introduction to the theory of transformational syntax ("*IPTS*"), with an enthusiastic recommendation on the dust jacket from Chomsky himself (an accolade so far only accorded to Cattoll's *The new English grammar*) commands our attention more than all but a select few among the numerous current introductions to TG. This is a comprehensive, methodical American introduction to American TG syntax. The Bibliography of 97 items is 95% American in content, and the approach is exclusively in the terms of current TG theory and practice, seen exclusively from the inside.

To this extent *IPTS* differs from its predecessors in quality rather than in essence. Its real originality lies in its insistence on the principles of transformational argumentation, unlike many introductions to TG which are structured around the complexity of (English) syntactic structures rather than the often parallel, but not identical, question of the complexity of syntactic argument. A further distinguishing feature of *IPTS* is its very Socratic style of exposition. The student is presented with a problem and invited to work out a variety of answers, which are then discussed. Each chapter is accompanied by an additional set of exercises, and a list of suggested further reading.

*IPTS*, like many of its competitors, is fundamentally based on Chomsky's *Aspects of the theory of syntax* (1965). Akmajian and Heny begin oddly, but effectively, from a discussion of the Tag-Q rule and how it should be formulated, with the aim of showing just how much information, and of what kind, is necessary to produce correctly formed tags, and avoid non-sentences like:

\*John likes Jill, liken't he?

\*The man that was playing the violin has stopped, wasn't he?

Having sensitized the student to the dangers of subconscious and informal grammatical statements, the authors discuss in turn a basic Phrase Structure grammar (Ch.2), the necessity for transformational rules to supplement PS rules (Ch.3), the problems of the English auxiliary (Ch.4, strangely omitting any reference to Huddleston's and Palmer's contributions), problems in the formulation of transformations (Ch. 5), the ordering of simple T-rules (Ch.6), recoverability and meaning-preservation (Ch.7), S-embedding (Ch.8), Equi and raising (Ch.9) and the complex ordering of rules (Ch. 10). The overall picture of English syntax is deliberately far from complete, or even representative: unquestionably syntactic topics like relative clauses, conjunction, ADJ-fronting, topicalization, cleft and pseudocleft sentences, and stylistic transformations, to name a random few, all receive perfunctory or very brief attention. But the authors are immune from such criticism *in so far as it touches questions of explicitly English syntax*. The measure by which *IPTS* must be judged is to what extent they succeed in conveying a balanced and informed account of transformational argumentation.

And on this count, as Chomsky states, they score very well. This is not a book for the beginner or the unguided learner; but with good tuition it should show students a lot.



of what they need to know. It doesn't beg questions, and it doesn't fudge. My main misgivings are admittedly to a degree subjective, and concern the question of balance, and the problem of relating *IPTS* to the rest of the literature on TG.

To take the problem of balance first. Overall, *IPTS* stands as an introduction to the general theory of transformational syntax only in so far as the syntax of English is typical of general syntax. The authors, with characteristic frankness, do not hide this shortcoming (p.xi), and it is obvious that one has to set some (albeit arbitrary) limit to the amount and variety of information which an introduction can reasonably handle. On the other hand, this does lead to some imbalances. *IPTS* has an illuminating extended discussion of the English auxiliary, which is typologically not really typical of the European languages with which I am familiar. And it has almost nothing to say on case (number) etc. marking, or the way in which case (etc.) endings, for example in the Slavic languages, condition and control grammatical rules, or how they act as markers of constructions. As one would expect, prepositions and prepositional phrases are consequently not treated in any depth either, and we thus miss not only a big area of English syntax, but also a part of the no-man's-land between syntax and the lexicon where English and many noun-inflecting languages — like Slavic — differ most significantly.

This leads directly to my second misgiving. I strongly applaud a more syntactic treatment of syntax than was common in the paraphrase-inclined years following the promulgation of the Katz—Postal criterion in 1964: Huddleston, in his estimable *Introduction to English transformational syntax* (London: Longman, 1976) echoes this improved perspective. But the student who ventures outside the pages of *IPTS* needs some guidance about the territory awaiting him — a map of the pilgrim's future progress, as it were. From this point of view *IPTS* is too self-contained. It does not look sufficiently outwards. In spite of the lists of recommended extra reading, the student will experience difficulty in approaching much of the outside literature in American TG, let alone the wider world of linguistics outside North America.

But at this point we come back to the teacher, who should be responsible for such guidance, and to the fact that this is a *textbook* of a restricted area of linguistic theory, seen from the point of view of one specific language. And a very good textbook it is, too. It is frank about its limitations, and fastidious in its pedagogical care and linguistic detail. TG isn't easy, and neither is this book. But in its field it will take a lot of beating. Students who want a wider perspective of linguistic argumentation may need to turn to Huddleston's *Introduction* mentioned above; others, wanting a still more theoretical orientation, may embark on mathematical linguistics. In either case, Aknajian and Heny will have laid solid foundations for future progress.

*English and English linguistics.* By R. L. Whitman. Pp. 243. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975.

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It is amazing that most of the books on TG<sup>1</sup> grammar which have the magic word *Introduction* in their titles, like R. Huddleston (1976) or A. Aknajian and F. Heny (1975), are neither introductory nor elementary as regards their contents. The book under review is an exception in this respect; it is both elementary and introductory although no reference is made to this in the title.

The book is divided into three parts: (1) *theories in linguistics*, (2) *phrase structure grammar*, (3) *transformations*, followed by an *appendix, answers to exercises* and an *index*.

<sup>1</sup> TG = transformational-generative throughout.

Part One: *theories in linguistics*.

In the opening pages (1.1) Whitman presents the structuralist-transformationalists' discussion of the status of linguistics as a science thus introducing the reader to the controversies of the 1960s. This short introduction is followed by a comprehensive presentation of other approaches to the study of language. Hence, with the discussion of traditional linguistics (1.1), structuralism (1.12) and the impact of the latter on the theories of language learning (audio-lingual method) (1.13), the proper historical setting for TG grammar is established. The section closes with the presentation of the assumptions underlying the TG approach to the study of language with special emphasis on the role of intuition (1.15) in grammar.

Whitman uses fairly informal language throughout the book, which adds to its attractiveness for the student yet sets "traps" for the author. For instance, when discussing intuitions Whitman states that: "First he [TG linguist] invents (hypothesizes) a rule, then he creates sentences that obey the rule and others that break the rule. He tests all of the sentences on speakers, and if their judgements accord with the grammaticality values predicted by the hypothesis he feels that hypothesis is supported" (p.21). In view of the scepticism of many linguists towards the reliability of tests of grammaticality<sup>2</sup> the above statement seems to be at least an oversimplification of a serious methodological problem of the verification of linguistic hypotheses in general and can only be justified on the assumption that the book under review is addressed to students with no previous training in TG grammar at all.

Section (1.2.) is devoted to those characteristics of language which have been brought to light by TG grammar, hence its title "Language is innate, universal, abstract and creative". The discussion of innateness involves the introduction of Chomsky's LAD ("language acquisition device"). The two pages (pp.22-23) devoted to the acquisition of language are certainly valuable in a book written for prospective teachers of English. However, a few more lines about bilingualism would be desirable, especially that the explanation given does not seem clear enough. The author says: "If the environment offers two sets of data — say both French and Chinese — the child cannot be expected to recognize this. However, his LAD will almost infallibly distinguish between the two intermixed sets of data, either rejecting one or providing rules for both, in which case the child grows up bilingual" (p. 23). Neither this mysterious process of "rejecting" one system (which to the reviewer's limited knowledge seems to have to occur under special conditions) nor the definition and types of bilingualism are explained. The easiest way out would be not to mention the problem which properly belongs to the domain of applied linguistics rather than TG grammar, as nothing of value in the presentation of the problem of innateness would then be lost.

The rest of Part One (1.4. to 1.6.) is devoted to the introduction of the structure of TG grammar. The notions of "performance" (1.41.), "competence" (1.42.), "deep structure" and "surface structure" are discussed as well as paraphrase, ambiguity and "quasi-ambiguous" sentences (the last term is introduced by Whitman to account for the famous *John is eager to please* and *John is easy to please* sentences). Worth noting in these sections are the presentations of approaches other than TG to the problem of ambiguity and paraphrase.

When discussing "performance" the author offers his original possible performance model. Although very superficially presented (hence difficult to comment on) it seems worth attention. It is a pity, however, that the author failed to distinguish different types of presuppositions in his model.

<sup>2</sup> Chomsky's views are to be found as early as his discussion of Hill's "Grammaticality" (1961).



By the end of the first part the reader is acquainted with the overall structure of TG model of grammar, its components and their functions. Part One closes with the reference list of recommended reading.

Part Two: *phrase structure grammar*.

The first sections (2.1., 2.2. and 2.3.) are concerned with explanations of the function of PS rules and the lexicon. A simplified set of PS rules generating simple sentences and the lexicon of seventeen items serve as a basis for the presentation of TG notation, the working of PS rules, the structure of the lexicon, types of information it provides and the role of features in a grammar. Although the instructions are clear and the author keeps them simple enough for the student unexperienced in TG grammar to follow, there is one great deficiency about the way Whitman provides the information. All three sections are devoid of contact with natural language as few examples are provided and the discussion is on a rather theoretical, though elementary, level. After all, a long list of eight different ways an auxiliary can be realized in English could have been left for the students to find out if the author, instead of listing the rules, had supplied the relevant examples (Whitman does not provide a single example in this section to illustrate this). Five sentences to analyse which follow (2.2.) do not seem to suffice. It is the present reviewer's opinion that a good handbook of TG grammar would be one which involved the extensive and active participation of students in constructing it, especially that attempts in this direction have been made and proved to be successful.\*

In his considerations of the lexicon Whitman distinguishes two types of features: syntactic (category and co-occurrence restrictions) and semantic (selectional features). In this connection, however, unnecessary complication of the model results as the author (for unknown reasons) abandons the use of  $\pm$  binary distinction for syntactic features. As a result their number is doubled of course. Semantic features, surprisingly enough, are not affected by this "innovation".

Yet credit must be paid to the author for constant remarks about other approaches to the problems discussed in this part, like for instance his references to lexicalists when discussing the lexicon.

The rest of Part Two is devoted to a more detailed discussion of PS rules separately. In section (2.4.), concerned with NP, the author tries to solve the puzzling problem of the English articles by postulating the following rule:  $ART \rightarrow (Quant) \div (Det)$ , where  $Quant \leftrightarrow Lex [Quant]$  (for example: *one, two, ..., a, some, many, etc.*) and  $Det \leftrightarrow Lex [Det]$  (for example: *the, this, that, etc.*) (p. 67). An attempt is made to separate indefinite and definite articles on the assumption that "a and the are really quite unrelated to each other" (p. 70). Although the proposal may have its merits as regards usage, the above formulation leads to a number of unnecessary restrictions which have to be made to ensure that \*a the ... or \*one of the girl are not generated. Apart from the fact that the ordering thus imposed blocks the generation of strings like: *the two books*. This seems to account for the confusion on p. 140, where numerals are listed both under *Quantity* and *Numerals*. Moreover, the introduction of a new constituent *Name* for proper nouns dominated by NP can lead to the false conclusion that the relation of proper nouns to common nouns is of the same character as that of nouns and pronouns. In the reviewer's opinion the burden of *proper/common* distinction should have been placed on the lexicon, as is usually done in other TG grammars.

Section (2.5.) about the AUX is an exhaustive discussion of English tense, aspect and modals. Worth mentioning is a very interesting presentation of the relationship between tense and modals, and the meanings of modals. Whitman discussed three alternatives for the former and presents the epistemic vs. root analysis of the meanings of

\* In this respect A. Akmajtan and F. Heny (1975) has no equal.

modals. This leads the author to the conclusion that there are homonymous modals; hence the lexicon contains two items for *may*: *may [Mod]*, (*Epis*) and *may [Mod]*, (*Root*), etc. From the point of view of usage this seems to be an interesting proposal. The subsection closes with the discussion of the *Flip-Flop* rule.

The PS rule for VPs in Whitman's approach is as follows:  $VP \rightarrow AUX + V + Comp$ , with a long list of how Complement can be realized in English. The author has discussed the difficulties involved in defining what counts as a Comp and has chosen to resolve the problem individually for each verb. The decision to include *Comp* as a general name for almost any constituent that can follow V complicates the problem of sentence complements discussed in Part Three of the book. Another important distinction made in this section is that of VAP and SAP, an Adverbial Phrase attached to VP and to S respectively. Part Two closes with a short discussion of *two-word verbs*.

On the whole, this part leaves little to be desired except that the author has failed to mention a few quite important details in connection with VPs, namely, particle/preposition distinction for phrasal verbs and *copula + NP* constructions in English; reflexivization and pronominalization are also only touched upon in the section devoted to NPs. The reviewer, however, is of the opinion that except for the opening sections the author has managed to keep a balance between practical grammatical problems and theoretical considerations. TG grammar is presented as a tool for explaining practical problems of English usage.

Part Three: *transformations*.

Under this heading Whitman discusses the problems of the generation of complex sentences as well as questions, negative and passive sentences. As far as passives are concerned, the author gives an *ad hoc* account in which *Passive* is established as a formal constituent of an Aux. In view of the fact that passivization is a troublesome problem for TG grammarians, Whitman's formulation could as well have been accepted if there had not been a strong argument against it. Namely, the voice contrast affects the structure of the whole sentence rather than the Aux element alone. In Whitman's formulation, however, the latter is clearly suggested.

There are some very interesting sections concerned with adjectives in this part. Whitman discusses two approaches: Chomsky 1965 (the Standard Theory treatment) and the "Non-standard" formulation in which adjectives are generated directly by PS rules. As on many occasions, the author provides a lot of information about usage as well as theoretical considerations. In connection with adjectives, for instance, adjective ordering is discussed.

In section (3.3.) the author presents nominalized sentences, which according to him comprise relative nominals, gerunds and infinitives. The distinction is clearly drawn on the basis of the types of complementizers that an embedded S can take. Unfortunately such a formulation has a number of disadvantages as well as merits. Firstly, it fails to account for sentences like *The fact that John did it amazed us* since noun phrase complements lack a head noun position in the deep structure. The *ad hoc* rule  $NP \rightarrow (the\ fact) + that + S$  which has been offered does not explain anything. Secondly, a semantically based distinction between "factive" ( $NP \rightarrow that + S$ ) and "questive" ( $NP \rightarrow if + S$ ) relative nominals has no syntactic motivation at all, since the deep structures are identical as regards their constituent structure. Thirdly, the additional rules  $NP \rightarrow S'$ ,  $S' \rightarrow (NP) + VP'$ ,  $VP' \rightarrow (AUX') + V + (Comp)$  and  $AUX' \rightarrow (Perf) + (Prog) + (Passive)$  that are to account for gerundive and infinitival structures unnecessarily complicate existing PS rules. Finally, in the above framework one important generalization is missing, namely, there is no way to distinguish between pairs like *I believe the doctor to have examined Mary* and *I believe Mary to have been examined by the doctor* as opposed to *I persuaded the doctor*



to examine *Mary* and *I persuaded Mary to be examined by the doctor*. Still, despite the above-mentioned shortcomings the attempt to systematize infinitives and gerunds in English is a notable advance in TG grammar writings. The presentation is consistent and exhaustive. This section closes with a list of fifty verbs and their complements.

The last section of Part Three (3.5.) is devoted to conjoined sentences; clauses showing cause and time/place subordinate clauses are only touched upon. An informal discussion of conditional clauses ends the section.

The appendix consists of a summary of the final version of PS rules and transformations and is followed by answers to exercises and an index.

In general, the book would be one of the best available handbooks on TG grammar if the author had not chosen to classify embedded sentences according to the type of complementizers which they take, which leads to a number of unnecessary complications of PS rules and limits the explanatory power of the model. Still, the lively language of the instructions and the gradation of the material together with the exercises (a few more would certainly add to its value, however) that follow each section qualify Whitman's book as a very useful handbook for use in the classroom for introductory courses in TG grammar. The most valuable are the informal discussions of grammatical problems of usage that no TG grammar can account for at present. Hence, in the reviewer's opinion the book is also a very good elementary resource grammar that should especially be recommended for prospective teachers of English. Credit must also be given to the author for numerous valuable remarks about approaches other than TG to the problems discussed, although in the Third Part of the book they are fewer than would be desirable.

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*Shakespeare—the poet and his background*. By P. Quennell. Pp. 367. London: Penguin Books, 1963.

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Shakespeare is the only playwright in the world who continually attracts the attention of literary critics not only to his works, but also to his personal life. And as we can find plenty of legends and guesses surrounding his name (increased by the absence of any biography for nearly half a century following his death), there used to be a belief that less is known about him than about any of the great writers in English literature. Nevertheless, owing to recent research it appears that the existing records of his life are almost sufficient to help us to understand his genius.

One of the first of such detailed attempts at presenting William Shakespeare's life and works on the basis of the preserved documents of his life is *William Shakespeare — a study of facts and problems* by Sir Edmund Chambers, published in 1930, in two volumes.

This book, however, is not only important for its message, but also because it evoked a storm of critical essays on Shakespeare's biography and works.

*Shakespeare — the poet and his background* by Peter Quennell belongs to this genre of critical studies. Peter Quennell, however, does not only present the life and works of the playwright, but also shows them against the background of Elizabethan customs and prejudices, putting them all in relation to one another. In other words, he sees Shakespeare and his plays through the historical and social events of the period as a typical representative of the period to which he belonged.

The book consists of twelve chapters of which the titles can quite successfully tell more or less their contents covering the life of William Shakespeare in chronological order. Thus, we have *Childhood and youth*, *London apprenticeship*, *The climate of the age*, *Early poems*, *His sugared sonnets*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Romantic comedies*, *Historical dramas*, *The fall of Essex*, *A new reign*, *Othello and Antony*, *An accommodated man*.

Peter Quennell presumes in his book that Shakespeare, being a witness of England's great achievements in philosophy, science, colonial expansion, navigation and other fields, must have been not only fascinated, but also deeply moved by the feelings of his age, finding an outlet for his admiration in his plays, where he recreated the Elizabethan life-style, environment and circumstances. For example, by analyzing the characters of Shakespearean plays he proves that whether they are British or Scottish, kings, gentlemen of Navarre, ladies of France, Greek and Trojan warriors, Roman statesmen, Athenian workmen, they are all really Elizabethans. For example in chapter VI, *Romeo and Juliet*, he writes while describing Mercutio that:

he is drawn from some contemporary London model, possibly from a garrulous member of the Inns of Court, who frequented the "gentlemen's rooms" at the theatre, and whom Shakespeare met behind the stage, no doubt his puns and quibbling pleasantries reproduce a current conversational style (152).

Later on, Peter Quennell's book makes us aware that if we actually are to understand Shakespeare's plays, we should, first of all, acquire some knowledge of the patterns of Elizabethan social relationship and behaviour. The relationship between parents and child, man and woman, master and servant, between equals and between those who belong to different ranks of society is one of the most important matters to be examined when analyzing Shakespeare's plays. For example Shakespeare's spirited heroines Portia, Beatrice, Rosalind, Helena — had their counterparts in real life women, who as P. Quennell states:

...built houses, ran estates and were strict overseers — like the Queen of the economy — of their households and of the manners and morals of their gentleman-servitors and waiting-gentle-women (p. 83).

In addition to this the Elizabethan women were highly educated, spoke several languages, and, under a female ruler, it was natural enough that they showed a proud and self-assertive tendency. He supports his point of view by giving us an example of the life of Lady Compton, the daughter of a rich London merchant, and Lady Bacon, mother of the great Francis Bacon. Thus, we should not be astonished that, like the typical Elizabethan women, Shakespeare's heroines possessed initiative and organizational abilities.

By analyzing the lives of outstanding Elizabethan personalities Peter Quennell can easily find echoes of their fortunes and falls in Shakespeare's historical plays. The political careers of Lord Southampton and Lord Essex so minutely described in chapter IX. *The fall of Essex* remind us of such Shakespearean characters as, for example, Cardinal Wolsey, Cranmer and Richard III.

In addition to this, P. Quennell tries to prove that the actual life of Shakespeare himself was quite typical of a man of his times. The Elizabethan period was full of ad-



venturous enterprises, search for new colonies, the war with Spain, and the uprisings in Ireland, which must have influenced its people's lives, entangling them in various kinds of activities and frequently in unforeseen outcomes. Thus, William Shakespeare being, according to Quennell's point of view, a true representative of Elizabethan age, lived his life to the full. Even if we only view the records preserved after his death we see that he had quite an adventurous youth — poaching, running away to London, being accused of taking part in a brawl in a theatre, selling and buying land — all this reflected in legal documents, while there is some evidence that he kept mistresses and even had an illegitimate child and that his death was preceded by his last drinking party with Burbage and Jonson.

J. I. Stewart in his review published in *Sunday Telegraph*, on this book, writes that in fact "this book is the latest well-accredited Shakespeare encyclopaedia". As far as facts and figures are concerned I quite agree with his statement. But Peter Quennell's book is more than just this, because in addition to records connected with William Shakespeare's life, it discusses a lot of controversial facts and fancies surrounding the poet, including even the hard-to-kill theories that he never wrote some of the works attributed to him, or that while being in London he held horses at the entrance of the theatre. As a result we receive quite a unique portrait of Shakespeare which makes us not only fully understand his genius, but also more affectionately admire his works.

Moreover, one of the main reasons for this book's superiority over others written on the same subject is that it is intended for the so-called general reader as the style is rather chatty, resembling more a conversation than a scholarly work bulging with information.

It is the author's general practice that whenever the reader is about to put the book aside after having read some strenuous pages overpacked with information and dates, Peter Quennell, as if aware of the tedium felt by the reader, smuggles in some anecdotes or gossips which serve as a stimulus for further reading. Thus, after a detailed analysis of Shakespeare's historical plays he switches to "the humors of Sir John Falstaff and swaggering Pistol" (p. 214), who in Shakespeare's time led almost an independent life, once they were created by the playwright. Peter Quennell writes:

Treated as personages of ordinary flesh and blood, he (Falstaff) and his friends and hangers-on made their way into private talk and letters. During July 1599, for example, Lady Southampton, writing to her husband in Ireland, remarks that "all the news I can send you that I think will make you merry is that Sir Falstaff is by his dame Mistress Pintpot, made father of a goodly miller's thumb, a boy that's all head and very little body" (p. 215).

This reminds us of the reception of Sienkiewicz's characters in Poland, when the adventures of Kmicic, Mr. Wolodyjowski or Mr. Skrzetuski, who gradually became flesh-and-blood personalities, attracted the continual interest of the public from the moment of the publication.

Another good side of Peter Quennell's book is that he neither pushes his ideas or guesses on his readers nor easily jumps to conclusions. He simply objectively presents all the available documents and points of view concerning a certain problem, setting them against the historical background of Shakespeare's period. And in this way he leaves his readers to draw conclusions themselves. For example in chapter I, *Childhood and youth*, we have the very controversial problem of the character of Ann Hathaway and her position in Shakespeare's life. Instead of trying to present his own point of view he simply quotes some critics, among them James Joyce, who wrote:

Ann Hathaway was a boldfaced country girl, who beneath a hedgerow or amid "the acres of rye" seduced a young and inexperienced lover. If others have the will

Ann hath a way. By cock she was to blame. She was the comether on him, sweet and twenty six (p. 25).

Later we confront the French biographer Louis Gillet, who gave his personal impressions of how she might have turned out as Shakespeare's wife:

C'était apparemment, une créature médiocre, de nature molle et passive, une femme commune et insignifiante... (p. 25).

With these comments Peter Quennell contrasts the situation of Elizabethan women at that time who were, as for example, "Penelope who married Lord Rich — fiery and energetic as the men they loved" (p. 26). Usually, however, the dominant females were members of the ruling class, or married to rich London merchants and Ann Shakespeare was the daughter of a modest yeoman who had wedded the son of a much impoverished country tradesman. Further in his analysis P. Quennell refers to some of Shakespeare's plays where he writes of "the miseries that attended an unsought marriage" (p. 27) (*Henry IV part I; The tempest; The taming of the shrew*). But at the end it is left to the reader to judge the exact relationship between Shakespeare and his wife.

As concerns the book as a whole, although the study is very exhaustive and profound I have found one objection. In one place of his study Peter Quennell endeavours to persuade us that the Elizabethan playwrights were mainly concerned "to please the crowd and swell the theatre's receipts rather than to perpetuate an honoured tradition or develop new aesthetic forms" (p. 42). Generally it seems to be true, but when we take, for instance, the works of Ben Jonson, we cannot agree with this statement. It is well known that Ben Jonson tried to develop a new aesthetic form in his own plays — *Bartholomew fair, Everyman in his humour, Volpone*. Thus, it is really a pity that Peter Quennell has not written anything on the aesthetic form of plays in the Elizabethan theatre and its influence on Shakespeare.

*Shakespeare — the poet and his background* is indeed a very stimulating approach to Shakespeare and his plays. Presenting to us a full panorama of the Elizabethan period P. Quennell makes, in a scholarly way, Shakespeare's plays clearer and his genius more apprehensible. Moreover, being aimed at a general intelligent reader the book makes the great poet more down to earth and closer to common people. This book may claim to be one of the best ones that has tried to acquaint people with Shakespeare and his works.