

Cullen's to which he refers in his last footnote, and shall again have a few things to say about his interpretations of Spenser and Marvell. But the complaint in the last paragraph of his "Reply" calls for some explanation on my part that goes much beyond the immediate occasion of our controversy. I apologize for having classed him as a New Critic since he disclaims this title. Years ago (*RES*, Nov. 1957, p. 382) I confessed that I used "New Criticism" to include anything that had been written on Marvell after my (French) book was published in 1928. But, jest apart, there is more of Empson's search for hidden meanings in Professor Cullen's method (as in many of his fellow critics') than he seems to be aware of. He claims that he is historical; he is . . . up to a point. When he meets history he either devalues it, as in "April," or ignores it, as in "Little T. C." And the obvious does not satisfy him. True, he does not make much use of the now well-worn "ambiguity," but he has a substitute for it, viz., "ambivalence"—a word already used in his "Reply" and occurring again and again in his book. He even sees a deeper meaning, too deep for me, in the frivolous conclusion of my "Reply"; so I shall give a graver one to this "Rejoinder," for him to exercise himself upon it: "Ante omnia tamen, fratres, hoc in nomine Domini et admonemus, quantum possumus, et praecipimus, ut . . . prius illud quod lectum est credatis sic gestum, quomodo lectum est; ne subtracto fundamento rei gestae, quasi in aere quaeritis aedificare."

PIERRE LEGOUIS
Université de Lyon

¹ An unfortunate double misprint has slipped into the third and last footnote of my reply to Professor Cullen (*PMLA*, March 1971, p. 277). Though Louis Lecocq's book was published in Paris there was no "Perversion" in its publication; on the contrary "Perversion" should be read, instead of "Version," in the title of S. K. Heninger's article, published in *JHI*.

Literature and Morality

To the Editor:

I have been most happy with the new trend in *PMLA*, specifically the Forum, which, I feel, adds a new dimension to the publication in its pursuit of truth.

However, if I may, I should like to add something which I do not believe has been made clear in the letters published in the Forum thus far. Scholars since World War II have tended to assume that Henry James is beyond criticism when he draws a clear line between the "moral" and the "aesthetic" in *The Art of Fiction*, saying that the latter is a matter of "execution" and that there cannot be moral or immoral

"execution." This assumption, however, is completely false.

In order to show why it is false, I need to examine the words *moral*, *immoral*, and *unmoral*. It should be apparent that our language is deficient in that it poses only one word as the logical opposite of *both* the words *immoral* and *unmoral*. This has led to a terrible blurring of the distinction between the *general* and the *specific*. On the general level in which *moral* contrasts with *unmoral*, we mean by the former term "moral matters"—those matters which any person gives "top priority value" to. Now everybody everywhere, educated or uneducated and regardless of social status or wealth, gives "top priority value" to *something*. If he is educated, he may be very articulate about it; if he is not, he may not even understand clearly that he does so. But it is simply not possible for a person to be *human* and at the same time *unmoral*. As a matter of fact, it is this insight which Stephen Crane uses when he draws a distinction between man and nature and says that, *because* of nature's unmorality or indifference, man must *build* a brotherhood.

Now, to go back to James, I think that one can see that he has not "won" the field at all. He has simply indicated that he places the "aesthetic" above all else in his value system—in other words, he indicates that he gives to the "aesthetic" that "top priority value" which makes his judgment a fundamentally moral one in the general sense. When we see this clearly, we can then debate whether James's doing so was justifiable or not. I personally do not believe that it is at all justifiable, for it places "something else" above "humanistic" value, just as many persons professing "humanism" do. Only if the human being is placed first in the value hierarchy, it would seem, can one lay claim to the title of "humanist."

Obviously, one's decisions about such matters will affect his politics as well as his views of literature. My purpose here is to point this out so as to clear away the confusion which, I feel, underlies so much that passes for "literary criticism."

ROBERT P. SAALBACH
Terre Haute, Ind.

PMLA and Politics Continued

To the Editor:

It would be unfortunate if Professor James L. Allen's letter, "*PMLA* and Politics" (Jan. 1971) were to pass unremarked. Leaving aside the fact that *PMLA* has long been a repository for the Association's internal and perhaps even political affairs (e.g., the presidential address), I must say that the recent articles of Professors Smith, Hook, Crews, Ohmann, and others have made the journal vastly more readable,