

evident, the watchwords of Ronsard. To secure the first, he freed French verse from the bonds of complicated measures; and he attained the second by the recurring strophe, which he established as a law. This was his real contribution. He did not invent the ode "mesuré à la Lyre," but he did insist that all odes should be so measured, *i. e.*, must be so arranged that music suited to the first strophe would serve also for those that followed.

Such, briefly, is the outline of M. Laumonier's treatment of his interesting subject. If the reader is sometimes tempted to find the exposition unduly long, he is recompensed by the acuteness of observation and the largeness of view which, united to carefulness in detail and unvarying modesty of statement, are the characteristic note of the critic. And yet such modesty does not prevent M. Laumonier from holding his own when differing with established authority. If he disagrees with Froger on Ronsard's arrangement of the *Œuvres* of 1560 or with Blanchmain and Marty-Laveaux on the paternity of the *Dithyrambs*, if he corrects Sainte-Beuve on the chronology of the anacreontics or condemns his view of Ronsard's final expurgations, no less than the views of Colletet, Blanchmain and Marty-Laveaux, he seldom fails to leave upon the reader the impression that he has the weight of evidence with him. Nor does he hesitate to try conclusions more than once with M. Henri Chamard, the strongest authority on the beginnings of the *Pléiade*.

The book is completed by a valuable documentary appendix, an excellent bibliography of Ronsard followed by one more general, and a full index of names and table of contents. The English speaking reader may regret the exclusive nationalism in literature (or perhaps the inadvertence) which from a bibliography including such general works as those of Decrue de Stoutz omits Pater's illuminating essays, C. H. Page's introduction to his *Songs and Sonnets of Pierre de Ronsard*, or Hélène Evers' edition of Colletet's *Notice sur la vie . . . de P. de Ronsard*—a work to which, however, M. Laumonier gives due place in his own edition of the same biography (Paris, 1910).

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Benedetto Croce: *Saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Seicento*, Bari, Laterza, 1911, pp. xxiv, 444.

This volume comprises a series of eight studies, of which the first seven appeared between 1890 and 1900, now reissued in enlarged and corrected form. The eighth is entitled: *Sensualismo e ingegniosità nella lirica del Seicento*, and is intended to serve as an introduction to Croce's anthology of *Lirici marinisti* (Bari, Laterza, 1910), one of the first volumes in the gigantic series of *I scrittori d'Italia*, now in process of publication. This essay, of the whole number, (pp. 377-433) is the most broadly theoretical in its scope; it is also the most essentially new. To it therefore we will confine our few observations.¹

With Croce's methods and views in this essay we are wholly in sympathy. His investigations proceed on the apparent assumption that before we explain the Seicento we must know what the characteristics of the Seicento really are. A vague notion of its general features of course has always existed: critics have been content to leave this conception in its hazy atmosphere, and untiring energy

¹ The others treat of Giambattista Basile, Cervantes in Italy, Spanish influence on Italian Sacred eloquence, the origin and history of Pulcinella; the Neapolitan type in the comedy, Salvator Rosa, Carlo Celano's description of Naples.

has then been spent in discussing its possible causes, origin and prototypes. The futility of this procedure was pointed out previously by Croce in his essay on the definitions of literary terms (Romanticism and Classicism), recently republished at Bari in his *Problemi di estetica* (Bari, 1910). There he devoted some incisive remarks to the use of the term Seicentismo itself.

The author sustains that the distinctive artistic impulse of the writers of the Marino type is sensualism, accompanied by a formalistic theory of the *concettoso* style. This sensualistic view of life is the product of causes now generally known: it is already well developed in Tasso and other poets of the Cinquecento. In the seventeenth century the striking trait is the predominance of this over other motives. The Seicento suffered the scruples of a religion superficially professed and yet gives vent to the only passions that really warm its heart." Sensualism does not have a very profound psychological history to reveal. Its literary monuments will largely consist therefore of the descriptions of lascivious scenes, portrayed in their every detail. Literature will accordingly be realistic even to extremes; and this realism will be applied not only to the description of woman, but to nature and life as a whole, the whole, too, interpreted from the same sensual viewpoint. These observations apply as well to the figurative and plastic arts; and Croce cites descriptions of episodes and scenes that have parallel treatments in painting and poetry.

Having exposed already his ideas on the theory of the *concetto* in his essay on *I trattatisti italiani del concettismo e Baldassar Gratián*, also republished in the *Problemi di estetica*, Croce here limits himself to an esthetic estimate of the rôle and success of the *concetto* in practice. He concludes that as a whole this theory of form was pernicious to art for the reason that the conditions where a conceit is a natural form of expression are rare. It has the defect that any mere theory of style has, when applied arbitrarily to ideas intrinsically foreign to it. It has however an essential relation to one phase of sensualism, gallantry, especially where gallantry expresses itself in jocose, grotesque or good-natured irony. Naturally, judging the question in the light of his own concept of esthetics, Croce considers each case as demanding individual criticism; and he cites examples where the *concetto* succeeds in his opinion, others where it is an unhappy exterior appendage to the thought.

The essay concludes with a comparison of modern *decadent* sensualism, particularly in D'Annunzio, with that of the Seicento. As usual Croce's erudition enables him to point out some interesting external similarities between works of the Seicento and those of D'Annunzio. In accordance with his expressed view on literary sources, plagiarism, and concrete comparisons between authors, Croce observes that such a line of thought serves only a pedagogical purpose, in helping the reader better to appreciate the peculiarities of each epoch.

One will doubtless decide that this treatment of the *concetto* has little novelty but it serves to complete the very illuminating discussion of the subject published again by Croce last year. Of this new statement of the importance of sensualism in the Marino school we heartily approve. In fact, in the *Ateneo Veneto* for July and August, 1910 (p. 6 of the extract), we expressed likewise the opinion that sensualistic realism was the most vital part of Seicentistic literature; and pointed out the similarity between the poetry and the painting of that time, of which the writers of the Seicento themselves were conscious. One has only to note in this connection, attempts like that of Cappellari in his poems on sculptural monuments, actually to reproduce the effects of the other arts. An ode of

Busenello on the death of Claudio Achillini (*Qual pompa funeral, qual tomba è questa*) consciously affects the style of Achillini's tomb; and one could find plenty of other instances in the various *raccolte* of the period. Busenello's reproduction in verse of Pietro Liberi's painting on the battle of the Dardanelles we studied at some length in the *Ateneo Veneto* for 1908. To be sure these are conscious imitations; the parallels cited by Croce better reflect the esthetic aspects of the question, from the fact that they were accidental and involuntary.

It is clear too that, with all their keen determination of issues, these notes of Croce are far from exhausting definitively even the theoretical phases of this problem. We believe that sensualism is not an ultimate trait, but that it is itself the reflection of a more fundamental state of mind, of that pessimism namely which from various causes came to hold the Seicento in a relentless grip. This idea we attempted to develop in a paper read at the Modern Language Association conference in December. It will appear in our studies on Busenello now in press. Croce believes that Platonic ideas had little efficacy in the Seicento. On the contrary, Platonic memories are widely diffused, though it never is more serious in the love lyric than religion is in the religious lyric. At any rate, the question needs special investigation, and would furnish rich material. The same applies to poems on the fear of death: this sentiment seems to us as deeply rooted as sensualism; and it was subjected to an identical treatment. Where the poets of love described in great detail scenes of courtship and enjoyment, they likewise contemplated in detail the Last Judgment, the ravages of disease, the decay in the tomb. The difference, if any, in artistic power of treatment, proceeds from the fact that sensualism was described from life, whereas death was in large part reconstructed from imaginary or dogmatic data. It is not a difference in sincerity or feeling. In discussing poetry on rural life, we must distinguish between the formalistic and the spontaneous. Some splendid monuments of the latter may be found in dialect writers. In our opinion too, we should include among the sincere interests of the Seicento, the pursuit of erudition, and the worship of fame, both of which are written so large over the face of its literature. The time has not come for definite pronouncement of the question of Seicento romanticism: sincere reflection of the individual in battle with the universe, and of his appreciation of that struggle, certainly exists. But in modern minds that attitude toward life is so associated with the moods of the nineteenth century that it is difficult to feel it under the strange dress of Seicento literature. In a sense, individualism, the fundamental impulse of romanticism, never enjoyed a more exclusive domination over men than in the seventeenth century in Italy. We do not believe either that the last word has been said on the *conchetto*. In general the queerness of these conceits consists in the fact that associations are established between objects that to us have no apparent relation. To the Seicento mind such a relation may have existed. And we believe that such a view is the inevitable result of that teleological conception of the universe which Aristotelian physics and Church dogma imposed on the Catholic world; whereby the *conchetto* became not merely ornamental but likewise rational.

Naturally we have no opportunity here to expand these reservations on Croce's statements in the essay under consideration; nor do they affect his major thesis. This thesis is a definite acquisition made for the criticism of an interesting but difficult period.

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