

## *The New Compass*

It happens all the time that books and magazines reappear as e-texts of some sort. Is there another example of the reverse process, a web magazine being printed? The Canadian critical journal, *The New Compass*, successor to *The Compass*, ran for four issues ten years ago only as a web magazine. Now one of its editors (who is also one of our directors) has produced a printed edition. I do think one reads the printed page with more attention and more pleasure than the same page on screen, laptop, or phone. I confess that I have now read *The New Compass* better than I did online—including my own contributions and replies that I ought to have paid more attention to!

*The New Compass* was a serious magazine of criticism, which any time in the last forty years made it a rarity. Patchy, of course: what periodical is not? But it had some good things (if I may say so as the author of two of them, in defence of Milton and on Conrad as the last novelist of Christendom) and a very good special issue on Yvor Winters (though as one contributor remarked, “Until we have a sound and substantial body of criticism of Winters’s poetry, we simply not know [*sic*] what his poems are worth,” and nobody in the special issue tried to start the discussion by “pointing to the least and most successful poems”).

I think the best thing in the four issues is a long essay (two lectures) by J. A. Burrow, on thinking in three medieval English poems, *Pearl*, *Piers Plowman* and *St Erkenwald*. Burrow does go quite a way with questions about what can happen when a poet tackles what is recognisably a problem in theology, and how poets’ thinking may differ from the thinking of theologians who are not poets. Sensitivity to the poetry discussed is of course necessary to the essay. This could of course be read on screen or as print-out but I don’t think I am only being old-fashioned in the opinion that one gets to grips better and more enjoyably with the printed page.

It is a pity that more care could not have gone into the design of this printed version. Linespace between paragraphs is not good practice. And it seems not to have been proof-read: the errors one looks for in texts transferred by optical character recognition are there in abundance: rn as m, close inverted commas sometimes ?, sometimes 9 and sometimes open inverted commas. And so on. Otherwise it is a nicely produced paperback, with big legible type.

It will be interesting to see whether anybody in Europe would like to purchase this unusual book. If so they will have to come to us: this side of the Atlantic it is available only on our website, and there will be more of a delay than usual in servicing orders because copies will have to be despatched from Canada.

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