

to whether he is content in the Happy Valley is qualified and cool: "I am less unhappy than the rest, because I have a mind replete with images" (Ch. xii). Imlac does not reveal himself as one who, to use Mr. Preston's words, "enjoy[s] to the fullest the limited joys" of the world (p. 279).

Mr. Preston also indirectly raises the question of world-weariness in Johnson's work by quoting William Sherlock, a "reformed" interpreter of Ecclesiastes: ". . . the Design of the whole Book of *Ecclesiastes* is not to put us out of Conceit with Life . . . not to make us weary of Life" (p. 280). While I agree that *Rasselas* does not "put us out of Conceit with Life," I would argue that it contains an undeniable note of lassitude in passages such as the following: "Imlac, though very joyful at his escape [from the Happy Valley], had less expectation of pleasure in the world, which he had before tried, and of which he had been weary" (Ch. xiv). The old man of learning, whom the prince and his party encounter, is tired of the world and of knowledge, and he leaves "his audience not much elated with the hope of long life" (Ch. xlv). This episode thus undercuts both intellectualism as a possible value in *Rasselas* and the commitment-to-life theme as well as illustrating weariness of life.

For these reasons, I have serious reservations about accepting Mr. Preston's thesis that *Rasselas* was influenced by the "reformed" school of interpreting Ecclesiastes which he describes.

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A reply by Professor Preston will appear in the March *PMLA*.

"Real English Evidence": Stoicism and the English Essay Tradition

To the Editor:

That Professor Earl Miner based his recent *PMLA* essay on an inaccurate assessment of the popularity of Stoic works in England during the Renaissance and the Restoration has been convincingly argued by Professors Freehafer and Williams.¹ There is yet another area in which Miner's study is misleading: he confuses the general popularity of a work with its degree of influence on writers. The "real English evidence" of Stoicism's influence (or lack of influence) on English writers between 1530 and 1700 lies not in a tabulation of publication data, but in the pages of English books written during that time. Professors Croll and Williamson have traced in detail the stylistic influence of Stoic writings on English prose, and their conclusions need no defense of mine. What has not been studied as comprehensively is the influence of Stoicism as a philosophy on English writers of the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such an examination is, of course, beyond the scope of the space allowed here; but a brief look at one important genre which flourished during the period that Miner considers can provide enough evidence to cast doubt on his conclusions.

Because it made its first appearance in English and grew into maturity during the period critical to Miner's argument, and because it is particularly susceptible to philosophical influences, the essay (with its associated forms, the meditation, the vow, and the resolve) is a good barometer of attitudes toward Stoicism in the late Renaissance and the Restoration. The first pieces in English that might be called essays, the anonymous *Remedies against Discontentment* (1596), are most of them Christian Stoic contemplations: "How wee ought to prepare our selues against passions," "Of vanitie," "Of aduersitie," "Of the affliction of good men," etc. Following this little book came such wholly or partially Stoic collections as Sir William Cornwallis' *Essayes* (1600–01); the *Meditations and Vowes, Divine and Morall* (1606, augmented 1609) of the "English Senec" Bishop Joseph Hall; Daniel Tuvill's *Essayes, Moral and Theological* (1609, augmented as *Vade Mecum*, 1631); Owen Felltham's *Resolves: Divine, Morall, Politicall* (1623, augmented 1628, revised 1661); and the essay passages in Ben Jonson's *Timber* (published posthumously 1640–41). Among the major essayists of the earlier seventeenth century, only Sir Francis Bacon failed to be much influenced by Stoic thought. And in the years following the Restoration, only Abraham Cowley, in his *Several Discourses by Way of Essays* (published posthumously 1668), exhibits any fondness for Stoic ideas, and he only occasionally and partially. English publishers may have issued relatively few books by Epictetus, Seneca the Younger, Tacitus, Aurelius, and Lipsius during the first six decades of the seventeenth century; but English essayists show a distinct reliance on Stoic thought during those same sixty years.

Because its ideas and sentiments are so typical of its period, and because its various parts were written over a span of thirty-eight years, Felltham's *Resolves* is a particularly good single work against which to test Miner's thesis.² In the 100 brief pieces of the first edition (1623), the eighteen-year-old Felltham sees the world to be in its decline, with goodness and justice at their lowest ebb; and he finds Christian Stoicism helpful in fortifying himself to live in such a world. In the longer pieces added in 1628, he considers and resolves Stoically such problems as "Of sodain Prosperitie" (i), "Of Resolution" (ii), "Of the losse of things loued" (xxx1), "Of the vncertainty of life" (xxxii), and "Of the temper of Affections" (Lxii). In "Of Fate" (Lxxix), he reconciles the classical Stoic concept of Fate, as illustrated by a quotation from Seneca's

Oedipus (ll. 1002–09), with the Christian idea of Providence, using—though not directly acknowledging—the argument presented by Lipsius in *De Constantia*. In the 300-odd small quarto pages of the 1628 additions, Felltham quotes Seneca (both the plays and the prose works) fourteen times, Tacitus twice, and Lipsius three times. And many of the attitudes and arguments that Felltham presents as his own betray the strong, though unacknowledged, influence of these and other Stoic writers.

In 1661, *Resolves* was reissued in what Felltham called “a new Forme.” If Miner’s thesis is correct, then one might expect the new pieces in this revision to be somewhat more Stoic than those of 1623 and 1628; but the reverse is true. While still Stoic in many ways (he could not reasonably be expected to throw over all of his previous thought patterns), Felltham tempers his Stoicism with considerable optimism, admitting “That the present Times are not worse then the Former” (Lxxvi), and concluding that “in the general, the World is rather better then worse then it hath been.”

Stoicism more often than not appeals to people living in hard times; when times change for the better, the need for Stoic consolation fades. This is probably why Felltham and other essayists needed Stoicism in the earlier seventeenth century, but not in the later. The first third of the century was, to many thoughtful Englishmen, a time of great apprehension; and the middle decades proved their worst fears well-founded. In order to provide themselves with some equilibrium during the hard years, many sensitive Englishmen turned to Christian Stoicism. When order was restored (or at least seemed to be), their thoughts could and did dwell on happier things, and they lost some of their need for the intellectual and spiritual comforts of the Stoic attitude. The idea of progress, moral as well as material, took hold; and after 1660 few new Stoic essays of any consequence appeared, though older collections were republished well into the reign of Queen Anne.

It should be emphasized that Stoicism is a private, not a political, philosophy. In searching for Stoic influences on Restoration literature, Miner asserts that Stoics held the individual to have “obligations (Cicero’s ‘offices’) to others and, particularly, to public service” (p. 1033). This is not an accurate representation of Stoic beliefs. From Zeno to Lipsius, Stoics and neo-Stoics emphasize indifference to worldly affairs. The “offices,” which Miner believes to be Stoic in origin, actually constitute one of the major differences between Cicero’s position and that of Stoicism.

It appears, then, that “real English evidence” supports the traditional view: an interest in Stoic thought flowered in England during the earlier seventeenth century and faded from popularity soon after the Res-

toration. Granting the premise that “in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries writing was a learned enterprise based on models,” which Miner accepts as true (p. 1025), it does not necessarily follow that the most popular books exerted the greatest influence. Unless they consider internal evidence as well as frequency of publication, future literary historians might reasonably conclude that *Gone with the Wind* exerted more influence on serious American novelists between 1940 and 1960 than did either *The Sound and the Fury* or *Ulysses*.

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Notes

¹ Earl Miner, “Patterns of Stoicism in Thought and Prose Styles, 1530–1700,” *PMLA*, 85 (1970), 1023–34; John Freehafer, “A Misuse of Statistics in Studying Intellectual History,” *PMLA*, 86 (1971), 1028–29; Franklin B. Williams, Jr., “Stoic Reading in Renaissance England,” *PMLA*, 86 (1971), 1029–30.

² Space does not allow the buttressing of my conclusions regarding Felltham’s Stoicism with extensive quotations from *Resolves*. For that corroborating evidence, see the second chapter of my *Owen Felltham* (New York: Twayne, in press).

Carlyle and Arnold

To the Editor:

D. R. M. Wilkinson ends his timely article, “Carlyle, Arnold, and Literary Justice” (March 1971), with these words: “It is generally accepted that in order to improve one’s position on the academic market one must write a book, and it seems to be the prevailing belief that if one writes a book, say, on Davenant, Prior, or Macaulay, then it is one’s business to rank these writers as far as it is in one’s power to do so, with Ben Jonson, Dryden, and Coleridge, and to forget about the vital matter of getting them into a better critical and historical perspective (which is much more difficult, of course).”

As the author of one of the only two full-length books on D’avenant (as he always printed his name on all his title pages), I must enter a demurrer against Mr. Wilkinson’s too careless selection of examples to illustrate his thesis. The dominant tone of my own approach to Sir William, the unofficial laureate between Jonson and Dryden, never even implied his equality with either of them, although he was associated with them both; rather, this tone was critical and ironical.

So I now turn over to Alfred Harbage and the authors of the books on Prior and Macaulay (whoever they may be that Mr. Wilkinson has in mind) the job