

Haydon. Thackeray's talent as an illustrator is considerable, but does not match his talent as a novelist. It is a small, limited talent, not a large encompassing one. The illustrations add only accent marks to his writings. Though John Buchanan-Brown recognizes Thackeray's artistic talent and gives his illustrations the serious attention they deserve, he definitely keeps them in perspective, both in terms of Thackeray's literary works and with the achievements of other Victorian illustrators. Thackeray's pictorial images cannot substitute for his written words, but they can heighten the enjoyment and understanding of them.

Helene Roberts

Anthony Thwaite. Victorian Voices. Oxford University Press, 1980. 42 pp. £3.95.

This is a strangely raddled book. The blurb reads in part: "Fourteen monologues, spoken by fourteen not very eminent Victorians: the enterprise is a strange one, and is bound to recall Browning's 'Men and Women'. But there are no direct comparisons to be made." Why it should recall Men and Women and not Dramatic Lyrics and Dramatic Romances is unclear to me. One suspects that Men and Women is singled out for its apparently contemporary male-female social connotations. In any case, Thwaite marinates his work in Browningsque rhythms, most noticeably from "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," "My Last Duchess," and "Fra Lippo Lippi." But the rift between Browning and Thwaite is enormous. The writer of the blurb is careful to omit "dramatic" before "monologues," because what Thwaite supplies is more in the nature of ruminative soliloquy, and his "voices" bring up the old problem of the One and the Many as they are clearly one; and that a ventriloquist's. To shift the imagery a bit, Thwaite offers us a group of loosely trussed and meagerly stuffed scarecrows, or a shadow-gallery of voluble caricatures. These are not honest, "round" characters who speak for themselves but escapees from "The Fall of the House of Usher."

Thwaite gives us no reason to trust him in this book. We are left wondering just what mirrors he has used. Surely, "At Marychurch" recalls, apart from its naive argument against Darwin (Lyell strikes me as the legitimate target), Meredith's The Egoist and Fowles' The French Lieutenant's Woman; "To a Girl of the Period" brings Kate Millet's Sisterhood Is Powerful to mind; what is best in "Messages from Government House" and "The Studio" had already been eloquently rendered by John Masefield in "Cargoes"; "The Potter's Field" impresses me as