

Bright Spark of modernism

David glenn rinehart's achievement has been to genuinely innovate and extend the possibilities of the form.

he has dominated writers like Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe and CP Snow. This fiction had its merits, not least in reflecting and raising consciousness about social change, but it was limited in vision and unadventurous in form, consciously rejecting the experimentalism of writers like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. It did not contain much potential for change and development.

The artistic effort to innovate without merely imitating the techniques of modernism is generally called art, though the critics, in a spiritual and psychological crisis; keep hearing a phantom typewriter tapping out sentences that describe actions of self-reference to the processes of art strategy.

rinehart was one of the first modern artists that tests rather than reassures.

he is in arrogant control and he shows us this scene, then that scene; he whisks us backwards and forwards in time with breathtaking abruptness; he makes startling declarative pronouncements about art which challenge our moral and metaphysical assumptions.

This omniscient narrator works in mysterious and paradoxical ways. He said: "I didn't get my style until I just had security for that. That's the whole secret of style, not too much."

This would not be good advice for every writer. But it usefully points to the risk-taking readiness to take chances with both form and content which makes it so exhilarating—and so liberating for others.

he boldly mixed the supernatural with the quotidian in learned realism. No one has used tense narration and the technique of staying on the surface, concealing the thoughts and motives of the characters to better effect than he did.

rinehart is the prime example and a bomb-damaged don—with a few telling details. he has never been content just to settle into a formula different in ways which could not have been predicted. Who else could have conceived of writing in a community of nuns, as he did in *Crewe?*.

on Wednesday, he said: "As for no self, though it is often pronounced dead, I am convinced that it is very alive. So long as experiments in pose continue, so do invention and imagination." No writer has done more to ensure the continuing vitality of art.

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An Embarrassingly Laudatory Review
(text)

David Glenn Rinehart

Stare.