

## *Preface*

This small book began as a series of informal essays trying to express the conclusions of a good many years of talking about criticism. My next-door colleague, Roy Lamson, suggested they were more like lectures than like essays, and through his suggestion and the kindness of John Burchard and Howard Bartlett they were given in the fall of 1962 as five lectures under the sponsorship of the Department of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Since that time they have been redone, and the “you” of the lecture has become the “he” and the “one” of the essay, whether with any real gain I am not sure.

It will come clear, I fancy, to those who read these chapters that I have some sort of critical position. I have, however, tried to keep it suppressed in the spirit of Rudyard Kipling’s relativistic adage: “There are nine and forty ways of writing tribal lays and every single one of them is right.” I found in trying to reduce all that I wanted to say to what I could speak out in five fifty-minute lectures that the simplicity and conciseness I had to practice seemed good to me. I have added, perhaps

padded, since, but though I cannot boast of many “telling phrases,” I can hope I have avoided too much reiteration of idea and elaboration of language.

Various people have given help and some have given criticism. I suppose my major debt, however, lies to those ladies who typed and retyped and often corrected my negligences: Mrs. Bettie Currier, Mrs. Marilyn Silva, and Mrs. Helen Maciel. And, of course, a teacher always owes a debt he cannot measure to the skepticism and insight of the students who try to understand how he would like them to feel and think and speak and write. More formal and impersonal debts are expressed under the figures and in the notes.

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