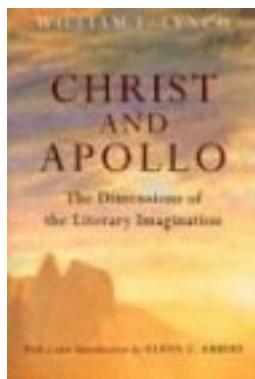


Christ and Apollo



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Christ and Apollo, originally published in 1960, is a classic of literary criticism, a book that Commonweal once predicted "may well change the course of literary studies." It did not do that, of course. Its literary, philosophical, and theological presuppositions, as Glenn Arbery points out in his new introduction, were too different from those of the ruling theoretical paradigms for it to be given a hearing. And that is precisely what makes it a volume worth returning to. In Christ and Apollo, William Lynch examines the Greek dramatists, Dante, Shakespeare, Proust, Camus, Graham Greene, and other writers in light of their affinities with two opposing tendencies. The symbol of the first approach is Apollo. For Lynch, this is the tendency to want to escape the finite, real world and the human condition of embodiment: it has much in common with what critic Allen Tate called the "angelic imagination." The symbol of the other tendency is Christ, the Word made flesh. Artists working in this tradition give readers a glimpse of the infinite by working patiently and honestly with the materials of the finite world, in all its messy imprecision. For Lynch, then, as Arbery points out, limitation, or finitude, is the great human good. Praised by Flannery O'Connor, among others, Lynch's sophisticated work is in many ways an important elaboration of the New Criticism, avoiding that school of thought's formalist excesses while providing it with firmer philosophical ground. For anyone interested in understanding what distinguishes

great literature, Christ and Apollo is an essential text.

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