Foreword

I AM GRATEFUL to have been given the sad privilege of introducing Albert H. Marckwardt's last book. In many ways it is an epitome of his life's work, representing as it does his love of English studies as a whole, his refusal as a linguist to regard literature as anything but central to his concerns, his deep interest in the teaching of English in every part of the world. Its value as a bequest, moreover, lies in its author's well-nigh uniquely wide and long experience as a teacher and an adviser of teachers and in the succinct way in which it presents the fruits of this experience.

Written in "retirement," when Professor Marckwardt was working with unremitting and characteristic energy at—with symbolic appropriateness—the East-West Center, Hawaii, the book reflects a mind not merely well-informed on the most controversial issues of teaching English as a second and as a foreign language but boldly determined to tackle them. He has left us much to argue over: specialists will fruitfully debate several of his detailed analyses, prognoses, and prescriptions. But few will fail to be convinced by the main lines of his book—a twofold thesis which in both respects is strictly congruent with his persuasively argued approach on related issues over the years.

First, despite the varied aims and conditions of English teaching, Professor Marckwardt argues unequivocally that literature has an indispensable place in the curriculum. But this is in no way to bolster up the old elitist attitudes of English teachers intent on transmitting their own expertise in the metaphysicals or Pope, still less to ignore recent demands for "relevance."

Second, just as he always insisted on seeing English as overwhelmingly a single language, so he viewed it as essential to regard all literature in English as significantly and fundamentally a single literature—the cultural product “of a world-wide linguistic and intellectual commonwealth.”

All in all, precisely the kind of last word that Professor Marckwardt would have wished to leave with us.

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