

FORUM

ON HARRY LEVIN

A BRIEF NOTE

198 Jonathan Hart
University of Alberta

Harry Levin was Irving Babbitt Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. One of the greatest American-born literary critics, he wrote many books on a wide range of topics, such as *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* (1941), *Toward Stendhal* (1945), *Toward Balzac* (1947), *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (1952), *The Question of Hamlet* (1959), *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists* (1963), *Why Literary Criticism is Not an Exact Science* (1968), *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (1969), *Memories of the Moderns* (1981), *Playboys and Killjoys: An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Comedy* (1986), and *Scenes from Shakespeare* (2000). Levin insisted on relating literature to its historical context. An accomplished group of scholars in different fields dedicated at least 22 books in various languages to Harry Levin. His influence extended well beyond Harvard and the United States. Levin also had connection with Canada. He spoke at many Canadian universities—Dalhousie, McGill, Montréal, Queen's, Toronto, York, Western Ontario, British Columbia—and to the Humanities Association of Canada, the Canadian Comparative Literature Association and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Levin received many honours worldwide, including those in France like Chevalier, Legion of Honor, in 1953. Thanks to the distinguished scholars, Jean Bessière and Ricardo Quinones, who have known Levin's work over a long time and who write, from France and the United States respectively, about Levin's last posthumous book, which Honoré Champion recently published.