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Sexuality and Form: Caravaggio, Marlowe, and Bacon by Graham L. Hammill. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Pp. x + 219. \$30.00 cloth.

“Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age”: Luce Irigaray’s assertion, quoted near the end of Graham Hammill’s *Sexuality and Form* (169), is surely right. The reason has only partly to do with identity politics over the past thirty years. Or rather, identity politics over the past thirty years speak to the same philosophical issues that occupy Irigaray in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993) and Hammill in *Sexuality and Form*. *Sexualität, sexualité, sexuality, sessualità, sexualidad*: such words entered European languages in the 1830s and ’40s because modern science demanded an abstract term to denote reproductive activity involving differences in male and female body parts and their functions. In the course of the nineteenth century that essentially biological concept became a psychological concept as *sexuality* increasingly came to mean the subjective experience of genital desire. The publication of Freud’s works in the 1920s made that shift in meaning decisive. Sexuality is, for us, a fundamental factor in self-identity. Thanks to Foucault and his *History of Sexuality* (first volume 1976), it is also a social, political, even ontological concept. The word *sexuality* marks the site where the human body, ideology, and subjectivity converge. For postmodern thinkers sexuality functions as a master trope, in much the way *anima* did for scholastic philosophers of the thirteenth century.

The convergence of body, ideology, and subjectivity is precisely Hammill’s focus in *Sexuality and Form*. The two terms in the book’s title figure rather like the two prongs of a horseshoe-shaped magnet, each attracting its own conglomeration of metal filings and holding them in a state of suspension, while connecting them over the top. On the “sexuality” side are flesh, Jacques Lacan’s *objet a*, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “intercorporeality”; on the “form” side are Norbert Elias’s “civilizing process,” Lacan’s Law of the Father, and ideology as a force of subjection. Hammill’s starting point for the entire project is Elias’s “civilizing process,” with its ambition to discipline the body and produce “an isomorphic relation between an increasingly sedimented body and an increasing abstracted judgment, the result of which is a regularized expression of social form as psychic space” (4). Hammill is interested in the violence of that process (a concern he shares with plenty of other critics)—and in the body’s resistance to that process (a concern he makes very much his own). Where other critics see binaries, Hammill is apt to see threes—even if, strangely, he consistently uses “between” to relate those threes to one another. In connection with the poses in Caravaggio’s paintings, for example, Hammill defines his project as “rethinking relations between being, violence, and the body” (21–22), while “sexuality” in the definition that governs the entire book

refers, not to object choice, but to “an insistent and repeated relation between corporeality, oneself, others, and the complexities of representation implied by the cluster of terms ‘body,’ ‘oneself,’ and ‘others’ ” (128). In effect, “sexuality” in Hammill’s formulation mediates among three entities: body, ego, and ideology.

As with “sexuality,” Hammill’s definition of “form” is primarily a relational concept. He resists the temptation to define “form” in terms of abstraction, as the antithesis of “substance” or as one part of the binary opposing the container to the contained. Citing both Louis Hjelmslev (*Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, 1961) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1987), Hammill proposes that form and substance each possess both expression and content: “Substance is not an unmoved essence, no matter how much the ideological urges of an alignment of forms might attempt to make it that. Substance is ‘chosen’ matter. It is not simply an effect of sedimentation, an effect of the alignment of forms, but comprises the nonce-ordered traces that matter as movement leaves as its wake. . . . Nor, then, is form a metaphysical entity, no matter how much the consolidation of power might attempt to make it that. Form is *the stylized rhythm of relationality*—regular or not—given this movement of matter” (41). With respect to form vis-à-vis substance Hammill arrives at something like Merleau-Ponty’s “flesh-in-the-world” or Judith Butler’s positioning of the body vis-à-vis language as a chiasmus: “Language and materiality are fully embedded in each other, chiasmic in their interdependency, but never fully collapsed into one another, i.e., reduced to one another, and yet neither fully ever exceeds the other” (see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* [London: Routledge, 1993], 69). Hammill’s model, however, refuses the binaries of flesh/world and body/language. Instead, he insists on sexuality as a state of in-betweenness that functions as a *tertium quid*, as the arc between the horseshoe magnet’s twin prongs in the image I invoked earlier. Homosexuality, that difference that is no difference (*homos* in ancient Greek means “one”), figures as a prime instance of this state of in-betweenness. Key to Hammill’s project is Foucault’s attempt in *The History of Sexuality*, particularly in Volume Two (*The Use of Pleasure*), to explore “aesthetic and practical forms of relationality invented *through, with, and against* the body” (21, emphases added). Also relevant is Lacan’s concept of *par-être*, situating oneself in time so that any formulation that would reduce the self to a subject of historical determinism can be met with the reply “That’s not it” (19). And of course Hammill drafts into service Eve Sedgwick’s expanded notion of “queer” as “dehiscence in the symbolic order” such that gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and other such categories of identity can be demonstrated to lack fixity (69). Where Sedgwick (at least in Hammill’s reading of her work) is concerned with ontology, with ego-formation, Hammill himself is concerned with epistemology, with ways of knowing. Hammill is less concerned with the free play of

signifiers than with the dynamic of flesh and form. *Sexuality and Form* is offered up as an exercise in “queer historiography” that explores “the limit of social thought” (169).

For such a project Caravaggio, Marlowe, and Bacon provide ideal subjects: well known in their own times as pushers of the envelope, all three men have been reputed to be “homosexual” since the introduction of that term in the late nineteenth century. In all three cases Hammill is on the lookout for instances of “sexed thinking,” that is to say, thinking through, with, and against the body, thinking that is not reducible to ideology, thinking that proceeds in terms of body, oneself, and others. The goal here is related to Foucault’s concept of *askesis*, “an exercise of oneself in the practice of thought” (18), with an emphasis as much on *practice* as on *thought*. What Hammill contrives in *Sexuality and Form* is a creative synthesis of three critical strategies: psychoanalysis (Lacan), the history of discourse (Foucault), and phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty).

As short in length as it is long in ambition, *Sexuality and Form* is composed of two introductory chapters, one on sexuality and time and another on bodies and the violence of form, followed by a chapter each on Caravaggio’s “boy-paintings,” Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, and Bacon’s attempts in several different texts to define a new epoch in scientific thought. A short meditation on “thinking sexualities” concludes the volume. In the course of each of the book’s core chapters Hammill finds occasion to focus on specifically homoerotic material: the poses of young male bodies in Caravaggio’s paintings, the myth of Acteon in Marlowe’s *Faustus*, Joabim’s report on European sexual mores (including “masculine love”) in *The New Atlantis*. But those episodes are never Hammill’s starting point. Rather, the argument in each of these chapters is deductive from the theoretical positions worked out in the first two chapters. In all three middle chapters there are, nonetheless, strikingly fresh readings of particular passages. Hammill’s analysis of the Acteon myth in *Faustus* is a case in point. The theatrical illusions that are conjured up for Faustus by Mephistopheles become test cases for “sexed thinking.” When Faustus entertains the emperor Charles V with an apparition of Alexander and his paramour, Charles believes what he sees, while Faustus’s crony Benvolio sees only fraudulence. “An’ thou bring Alexander and his paramour before the Emperor,” Benvolio declares, “I’ll be Acteon and turn myself into a stag,” to which Faustus responds, “And I’ll play Diana and send you horns presently” (quoted 110). The allusion to Acteon allows Hammill to invoke an explicitly homoerotic version of the myth in Plutarch’s *Moralia* 10:9 and to connect the existential dilemma of the stage apparitions (are they real? are they fraudulent tricks? to whose eyes do they seem so?) with the sodomite as the “specter” or “shadow” of the sodomite in Renaissance idealizations of male friendship. What Hammill finds represented in such questions is “the logic of sodomy.”

Every chapter offers similar moments of illumination, moments that send the reader back to the text under discussion with a fresh appreciation for the whole. It has to be said, however, that each of the middle chapters is indebted, in greater or less degrees, to already existing work by other critics: the chapter on Caravaggio to Leo Bersani and Ullyse Dutoit's *Caravaggio's Secrets* (1998), the chapter on Marlowe to Jonathan Goldberg's *Sodometries* (1992), and the chapter on Bacon to Evelyn Fox Keller's *Reflections on Gender and Science* (1985). Goldberg's influence is, indeed, apparent from start to finish. Hammill's best work in the book is, in my reading, his most original: the chapter entitled "Sexuality at the Epochal Threshold: Baconian Science and the Experience of History." Beginning, as Keller does, with the homoerotic scenario of *The Masculine Birth of Time* in which Bacon ushers a "son" into the new epoch of scientific knowledge, Hammill sets out by his own lights to consider two sets of problems that prevent Bacon, his "son," and his readers from ever crossing the threshold into the new regime of knowledge on the other side. The first problem, concerning the senses and grounds for judgment, is addressed through a brilliant analysis of fundamental tensions in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century jurisprudence that ought to become required reading for all students of early modern England. His analysis of the second problem, the bodily complications of "purging" the idols of the mind, is almost as compelling. Joabim, the inhabitant of Bensalem who startles the European voyagers in *The New Atlantis* with his knowledge of European sexual practices, exemplifies Bacon's project of scientific observation. At the same time, Joabim stands as the last in a series of exemplars of Jew-as-flesh that haunt Hammill's book.

For all its resistance to the ideological reductions of history, for all its insistence on embodied knowledge, *Sexuality and Form* speaks the very language of the ideology it sets out to challenge. In short, it is not an easy book to read. The abstract noun-ness of *Sexuality and Form* sorts oddly with Hammill's phenomenological project. The book's claims on the attention of contemporary critics lie precisely in its insistence that knowledge is not a *noumenon*, an object apprehended—something that exists in space—but a *phenomenon*, an appearing, a passing, a showing—something that happens in time. If space and time form the coordinates for being-in-the-world, it is the second of these reference points, time, that constitutes Hammill's most original contribution to current thinking. He is concerned throughout the book with what he calls "identitary time": the voice that has just sounded before the moment captured in the poses of Caravaggio's figures, the endless exchange of commodities to which Faustus barter his soul in *Doctor Faustus*, the prospect of an epoch ending and an epoch beginning in Bacon's scientific writings. In the final chapter Hammill draws out some of the implications of his concern with time. Where most queer critics have implicitly focused on space, on the sodomite as a visible sign, Hammill joins Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble*, 1990) in examining "social temporality." Thus, the "logic of sodomy" in *Doctor Faustus* is an endless

process whereby men affirm who they *are* by making reference to who they are *not*, which calls into *question* who they are, which impels them to affirm who they *are*. . . . Jonathan Dollimore in *Sexual Dissidence* (1991) has called this endless process “the perverse dynamic.” Hammill brings to the concept an acute sense of its temporality. In my view, *Sexuality and Form* is itself situated at a kind of threshold: it compresses queer criticism of the past and points the way toward a new way of thinking about sexuality not as always/already but as sometimes/if.

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Outsiders Together: Virginia and Leonard Woolf by Natania Rosenfeld. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. Pp. xii + 215. \$37.50 cloth.

It never ceases to amaze me that commentators well after the fact not only assert with absolute certainty what went on in the marriage of Virginia and Leonard Woolf but feel confident to pass judgment on it, when, if one were honest, one would have to admit that we can never be sure what is going on in the marriages of those we see daily. To her great credit, Natania Rosenfeld makes no such judgments in her highly intelligent and richly detailed study of the two writers, *Outsiders Together: Virginia and Leonard Woolf*. Instead, working closely with the materials we have, the written texts, Rosenfeld sets out to read them within and through the social and cultural contexts that shaped the writers' world, including their marriage. Foremost for her rendering of this world are Virginia's gender and Leonard's Jewishness, categories that placed them both in the position of insider/outsider within the sociopolitical, cultural milieu of early twentieth-century Britain. Operating from this multiply split position, a position associated with borders and boundaries, the two sustained not only a marriage and a major publishing house, the Hogarth Press, Rosenfeld argues, but a shared commitment to a critique of injustice that culminated in their anti-fascist writings of the 1930s. In the process, they played a major role in the advent of what we understand to be modernism.

“Border Cases,” the title of the Introduction, says it all, bringing into play a number of recent paradigms for exploring the complexity of sociopolitical relations and narratives at any particular historical moment. As Rosenfeld notes, “borders can be neglected edges, margins, repositories for refuse—prisoning yet often fecund spaces;” they can also be boundaries marking “the center of contested or quiet territory.” In this latter guise they can be either “closed, absolute, policed—and permeable only by violence” or “porous,

open, as good as unnoticeable" (7). Borders, as Jeffrey Cohen has argued, are where monsters reside, those signifiers of category crises in their crossing of boundaries, even as they police and excite our desires. Those living on the borders may be perceived by others or experience themselves as monstrous, as out of place, but their monstrosity, their displacement or alienation, can also be productive; it may be necessary for cultural critique. Edward Said makes this point when, equating culture with place, with "*belonging to or in a place, being at home in a place,*" he posits that the critic has to be "out of place," displaced, or homeless to acquire a critical consciousness. This displacement, this split, can occur even as one stands squarely at the center of the culture, a point that Virginia Woolf makes clearly in *A Room of One's Own* when she writes, "If one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilisation, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical."¹

For Rosenfeld, the concept of the border and the "border case" provides a metaphor for the complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion at the heart of both Leonard's and Virginia's writings. Beginning from the premise that "in opposed yet complementary ways, the Woolfs were outsiders together—she privileged by her background, but excluded from centers by her gender, he privileged by gender and marginalized through background," she sets out her thesis as follows: "Such a chiasmic alliance forces social borderlines into relief, making them inevitable objects of scrutiny—all the more so because Leonard Woolf, in his political scholarship, was by vocation a student of borders. . . . In their marriage the Woolfs enacted, and in their work they fantasized, theorized, and attempted, the crossing of borders intently policed in the 'real world.' As the founders and editors of the Hogarth Press, moreover, Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf laid a crossroads in the dissemination of avant-garde literature and ideas . . ." (4).

Two Woolfian figures help Rosenfeld define the parameters and the power of the metaphor: Judith Shakespeare, Shakespeare's imaginary sister in *A Room of One's Own*, a woman, a poet, and ultimately a suicide who is, like other monsters, buried at a crossroads; Septimus Warren Smith, the World War I veteran described by Woolf as "'a border case, neither one thing nor the other'" (4), who dies by throwing himself onto the railings that separate, rigidly, one property from another. Both of these preventable deaths, Rosenfeld argues, embody the social forces that prevent individuals from crossing boundaries, that work to keep individuals, especially outsiders, in their place. But as always in this richly nuanced study, nothing is ever one thing only; like Virginia Woolf, Rosenfeld is "concerned with the energies contained *within* a border figure and with imagining an internal dynamic that works against encasement and towards the connection of disparate objects" (5). To this end,

the book emphasizes “the intersubjective principle in Virginia Woolf’s prose and links it with larger sociopolitical questions about belonging and exclusion” (3).

Nowhere is intersubjectivity more at stake than in marriage, where the danger of annexation is always present; indeed, marriage and annexation provide the tropes that animate this study: “While Virginia Woolf often represents real marriages as microcosmic forms of colonization, tyranny, or warmongering, marriage as a *metaphor* in the writings of both Virginia and Leonard Woolf always stands for its opposite: a dialogue, in which neither subjectivity drowns out the other and both partners thrive” (3). Both writers, Rosenfeld argues, drew on the inspiration and stimulating irritation provided by the other in a marriage she describes as “a dynamic border case,” a “counterpoint of prejudice and empathy.” Each chapter reads the writings of the two against or through the other’s writings or presence: dialogue and dialectic are recurring motifs. Theoretically sophisticated, the underlying principle of Rosenfeld’s argument is deconstructive; her goal is to undo the binaries, the categories, that have limited critical assessments of the writers, their works, and their marriage. Doubleness, multiplicity, hybridity, crossings, translations become the prevailing discourse.

The first chapter, premised on novels conceived before the marriage and ultimately dedicated to each other—Virginia’s *The Voyage Out* and Leonard’s *The Village in the Jungle*—both of which have colonial settings, uses the hierarchical structures of imperialism, whether abroad or at home, to interrogate representations of gender, sexuality, and marriage. The second chapter opens with a linguistic re-reading of Virginia’s and Leonard’s notes to their friends announcing their engagement, texts that have generated some of the most damning judgments of their relationship; here, semantics replace assertions with brilliant results. Starting with the double meaning of *engagement* itself as both entanglement and challenge, for example, Rosenfeld transforms it into a metaphor for a marriage described as a “union tugging in two directions” (81). Two sets of paired texts make her point: Virginia’s *Night and Day*, often considered her most conventional novel, and Leonard’s *The Wise Virgins*; and the *Two Stories* that constituted the first publication of the Hogarth Press. All four signal endings that are also transitions, including the transition to modernism itself.

The following chapters focus on Virginia’s writings—*Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *The Waves*—bringing a rich array of fresh perspectives to the social critique and complex intersubjectivity inscribed in these oft-explored texts. One strand explores the “queer marriage” between granite and rainbow in Virginia’s writings; another explores the prevalence of violence found in her metaphors. This latter leads directly to the last chapter: an exploration of Virginia’s and Leonard’s attempts in the late 1930s to find a language that would not serve as an instrument of power.

Intelligent re-readings of familiar texts and theoretical sophistication are only part of what makes this book so informative and new; Rosenfeld has done her homework as well, drawing upon a wealth of historical materials. Ceylon and the colonial structures governing Leonard's experiences there, for example, are integral to her understanding of his subsequent openness to rebelliousness, whether feminist or anti-colonial, and his commitment to social change. Equally significant is a rich array of primary and secondary texts Rosenfeld draws upon, on the ambiguous social and cultural positions of Jews in Britain at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How, she asks, do the social/cultural realities, productively compared to Homi Bhabha's formulation of subaltern mimicry, manifest themselves in what often appears to be Leonard's Jewish self-hatred, an inscription that Rosenfeld reads as a complex interrogation of the double binds implicit in Anglo-Jewish class and ethnic identity. Confronted with the prejudices Virginia and her circle so casually held and displayed, Rosenfeld argues, Leonard was continually engaged in a precarious balancing act, caught between the snobbery he erected to distance himself from "immigrant newcomers" and the experience of Otherness, of being the target of prejudice, that led to his "deeply principled egalitarianism" (88). Here she fulfills the promise made in the Introduction "to illuminate rather than excoriate" (15) not only Virginia's ingrained biases but Leonard's ambivalent response.

Finally, I want to emphasize what may be the most rewarding aspect of Rosenfeld's study: her evocative unravelings of linguistic structures. A poet herself, Rosenfeld pays close attention to details such as incoherent syntax, ambiguous adverbs, Virginia's multiple semicolons, and pronomial shifts or slips that alter or deconstruct the surface meaning of a passage. She also delights in word play, both the Woolfs' and her own; puns prove particularly fruitful. She builds a powerful argument about language and violence through the pun on "pen" in *A Room of One's Own* (writing implement, enclosure [123–24]), for example, and riffs brilliantly on the opening sentence of *Orlando*, paying close attention to the pauses that translate the figure of Orlando into a text and the novel into a meditation on writing. Elsewhere the two x's in "fixation" and "paradox" provide an entrée into a reading of *Room's* Professor von X (9).

At times both the multitude of Rosenfeld's insights and her linguistic play tend to overwhelm, as much by our desire to know more as by the cascade of insights themselves. Tantalizing fragments of arguments sparkle before our eyes and then pass away, leaving us to wonder where they came from and where they might take us. In trying to do so much, that is, the work occasionally undermines itself. But these lacunae are more than compensated for by what we do have, including her insistence that language and writing lay at the heart of the Woolfs' understanding of interpersonal relationships in both the public and private realms: their recognition that language was inseparable

from relations of power. The book ends with a vision of Virginia and Leonard as siblings, momentarily equal “before ‘private brother’ has become a ‘monstrous male,’ before the sister has become a snob,” waiting for the first words of a possible new world (181). Rosenfeld’s linguistic skills and her rendering of the subtleties of the Woolfs’ language, marriage, and writings provide an excellent first step.

Notes

1. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25; Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), 8; Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (1929. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 101.

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The Measure of Life: Virginia Woolf’s Last Years by Herbert Marder. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000. Pp. xiii + 418. \$35.00 cloth.

The list of authors who have tried to describe the life of Virginia Woolf is long: it includes Woolf herself and her nephew, Quentin Bell (1972); Roger Poole (1978), Stephen Trombley (1981), Lyndall Gordon (1984), Louise DeSalvo (1989), Peter Alexander (1992), James King (1995), and Hermione Lee (1996). Now we must add Herbert Marder (2000)—yet another aspirant who has taken on the interesting, if apparently unresolvable problem of narrating the life of Woolf. (Marder’s book is distinguished from these in its attempt to study only the last ten years.)

Of all the biographies of Woolf, the most authoritative are probably Quentin Bell’s and Hermione Lee’s. Each book has its own claim to greatness. Lee’s 1996 study was hailed by American feminists as a long-awaited antidote to the excesses of DeSalvo and the blindnesses of Bell. Nearly 800 pages long, Lee’s *Virginia Woolf* is encyclopedic. Written by a feminist with considerable intellectual sensitivity and apparently endless patience, it demonstrates thorough research and a lifelong passion, even obsession with Woolf.

But for sheer wit and charm, Quentin Bell’s biography is hard to beat. Not only is Bell a first-rate writer, he is a Bloomsbury insider who can speak of Woolf in the first person. Bell’s biography is nevertheless flawed. Indeed, it has annoyed American feminists since its publication in 1972. In Bell’s hands, Woolf emerges too much as the upper-class madwoman dependent for survival upon her husband, the brilliant political strategist, Leonard Woolf. Most

disturbingly, Bell turns a blind eye on the political Woolf. When he takes up the important question of Woolf's *Three Guineas*, the antifascist pamphlet she spent six years writing, he dismisses it, saying that Woolf never had the gift for political writing and that she had best stick to the fictions for which she was better suited.

It's hard to know how Marder's book will measure up against these two more obvious giants. It's shorter and more lyrical than Lee's book; more sympathetic and more feminist than Bell's. The book's value—and that is considerable—must derive in large part from its focus on the last decade of Woolf's life. Such a choice, by definition, claims the importance of political Woolf, for it was in the thirties, during the rise of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, and Stalin, that Woolf became convinced that no artist could remain immune; in the thirties that she turned her intensities to pamphlet writing; and in the thirties when a life of thinking about women emerged as *Three Guineas*, her harshest and most comprehensive critique of patriarchy. In focusing on the last decade of Woolf's life Marder facilitates the American academic feminist shift from the public image of Woolf as the upper-class aesthete, to Woolf the political theorist and activist. Indeed, the book's title implies that Woolf's life should be measured not (as it usually is) by the experimental novels she wrote in the 1920s (*Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*), but by the more self-consciously political texts of the 1930s: the novel-essay *The Years*, the prophetic satire, *Three Guineas* (Suzanne Bellamy has called it the most important political document of the century), and the novel-drama *Between the Acts*.

Marder's book has much to recommend it: its sympathetic treatment of Woolf; its perceptive criticism of her work; its poetic/elegiac tone; its awareness of history. While Bell, for example, leapfrogs over such events as Leonard and Virginia's odd decision to travel to Germany in 1935 at the exact moment when Jew-hating Germany was revving up for war, Marder slows the camera down, taking us at a much more detailed pace through the events of that potentially dangerous trip. We see, for example, that Leonard's pet marmoset distracted the Germans from Leonard's Jewishness. "It was obvious to the most anti-semitic stormtrooper," Leonard later remarked, "that no one who had on his shoulder such a 'dear little thing' could be a Jew" (179). We hear of the worried ten minutes Woolf spent waiting in the car at the custom office on the German border where she feared increasingly that Leonard was being detained (in the event, Leonard was all right, though he had witnessed a "violent tirade" directed at the man in front of him, a peasant with a farm cart). Frightened by the custom house incident, the Woolfs showed exaggerated delight when a border guard smiled at their monkey. "We become obsequious," Woolf later commented disgustedly in her diary; this is the "first stoop in our back" (176), the first consequence of thugery.

Marder's prior contribution to Woolf studies is *Feminism and Art*, a prophetic study of Woolf's politics which anticipated the American feminists' appropriation of Woolf by almost a decade. It is endearing to find Marder returning to Woolf in his later years. From the lyrical-elegiac tone of the whole, one suspects that he is half in love with her. While Marder's tone seems objective, it is as if he must force himself to stay at a distance, as if his interest in Woolf could dissolve at any moment into something dangerously emotional. One feels a stiff upper lip driving the book, right down to its poetic last words, where he quotes Rhoda's death speech: "me dissolving." "Me dissolving"—the last words of Marder's book—are Woolf's words, not Marder's. In choosing them, Marder both intuits the stream of Woolf's own thought and allows it to carry the book.

I think Woolf would have appreciated Marder's version of her life. She was critical of the ways conventional biographies were written, of their assumption that outward facts were more important than feelings and intuitions. She was interested in the many selves that made up a life and defiant against the standard biographer's egotism. She herself always respected the otherness of her subject, even as she tried, as a biographer, to reconstruct the person's inner life. Marder is, in this sense, a Woolf-friendly biographer. His "I" doesn't dominate; instead he is a silent medium, a sympathetic presence through whom Woolf herself can be dimly seen, as if he had willed his soul to join with hers. Indeed, there is a sense throughout that his own personality is almost completely submerged in hers.

A few years ago, Jane Marcus wrote that what one needs is an artful biography of Woolf. Though Marcus qualified that a woman should write it, this book is certainly artful and empathetic. Each chapter ends with a cliff-hanger (but in truth cliff-hangers make for good writing, and Woolf experienced her share of them). Whether by the force of Marder's personality or Woolf's, one feels also in this biography, increasingly, the great weight and shattering sadness of Woolf's last years. Where Bell gives the idea of a romp, and Lee is astringent, oddly distant from her well-covered subject, Marder seems emotionally attached. A whiff of loneliness drifts through the prose. Woolf remarked that she had had more happiness in one day than most people had in a lifetime, but this biography gives us the sense that Woolf never experienced happiness without an accompanying cry or twang of pain. Woolf was acutely sensitive, sensitive to a fault. We are not surprised, at this narrative's end, by her suicide.

Woolf wanted to be taken seriously as a political thinker. At key moments in her writing, it is clear that she recognized herself as a visionary and a prophet of the first order. While she rejected medals, lectureships, the institutionalization of herself that would have required a compromise of her ideas, she wanted to be blazingly famous. When Wyndham Lewis wrote in a cutting review that nobody reads Woolf much anymore; and when Prince Mirsky

called her a bourgeois tippler, a panderer to the middle class, she was devastated. Every publication of every one of her books was an agony to her. She was delighted to be called the most “brilliant pamphleteer in England” by the *Times* after *Three Guineas* was published. For this very reason, and especially because in the days before her death she believed that she had “lost the art,” she would have appreciated Marder’s project. Now, see, here, one might overhear her say, he has seen what I was up to. He has shown a different light upon my work. He has allowed them to see what matters.

What killed her in the end? Was it the Duckworth brothers’ sexual invasions? Her sense that the apocalypse was at hand? Or her feeling, as Marder emphasizes, that she had “lost the art” and felt useless? Woolf died early, at 59, killing herself by stuffing her pockets with stones, and going to her death by water with the assuredness of an officer performing a duty. She went down to the Ouse before noon, leaving her walking stick behind, and without saying goodbye to Leonard or telling Louie, their maid. She was fervently committed to dying and unsentimental about it. It must have seemed to her, under the circumstances, the only way.

If the main idea of Marder’s biography is to establish the importance of the work of the ’30s; its most telling quality is the profound sense we are left with that Woolf’s life was a constant struggle against depression. “Those glimpses of her parents,” Marder writes, “inspired tender feelings, though she resisted nostalgia, knowing how oppressive those days had often been” (325). Every step forward, every sentence of the book seems to contain a balance of unhappiness. That unhappiness came in part from her temperament, in part from the black cloud of totalitarianism on her horizon, in part from despair. At the end, reading Coleridge, she heard “ancestral voices prophesying war.” The world had always been and was likely to continue to be unjust. For all her interest and passion, for all her desire to reform the ugliness of the world, she continued to feel like an outsider to a bloody boys’ club she could neither influence nor be taken seriously by.

Marder’s biography is a moving tribute to Woolf and an important contribution to our thick sense that Woolf is, at her best, a political writer and dark visionary of a dark and darkening world. She went down without being able to come up, having made her contribution in *Three Guineas*. She had taken the measure of life and in the end chose to die. The grief she left behind is like Marder’s closing picture of Leonard Woolf at the top of the stairs, turning away from Virginia’s friend, Octavia Wilberforce, in tears. There was nothing Leonard could do to stop her. One feels that this latest, if not greatest biographer—the sensitive Herbert Marder—shares Leonard’s feeling.

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Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama by Michael Neill. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. Pp. xii + 527. \$34.50 cloth.

Why do we need a collection of essays on early modern English drama ranging from the late seventies? Because Michael Neill is not as well known as he is informative and thought-provoking, less influential than he deserves to be. His collection is welcome for what it teaches about the plays and the period, for what it shows about our craft, for what it says about critical approaches, and for what he exemplifies as a scholar.

This collection is informative because Neill weaves a scholarly tapestry of early modern England and its drama, neither history as context for plays nor plays as strands of history. "To recognize the ways in which the kind of history I am interested in exploring may be inscribed in the minutest detail of dramatic texts is, of course, to recognize the final inseparability of the aesthetic from the social and political in literary works" (5). The fifteen essays that follow the brief introduction are divided into "The Stage and Social Order" (seven) and "Race, Nation, and Empire" (eight). But throughout they interweave thematically. The initial essays open with questions about hierarchies of service and rank, weaving among social historians today, conduct tracts then, local histories and anecdotes, and plays, bringing rogue Gamaliell Ratsey together with stage villains Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi* and De Flores in *The Changeling*; the Marquis of Newcastle with Kent and Lear; I. M. and his plea for reform of the patronage of serving men with Mosby in *Arden of Faversham*; Cleaver and Dod's *A Godly Form of Household Government* and Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* with Sir Giles Mompesson and Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and *The City Madam*. This web blends into questions of the adulterous connotations of bastardy and then counterfeiting from Joan La Pucelle in *1 Henry VI* through Edmund in *King Lear* to Spurio in *The Revenger's Tragedy*. The series concludes in a rhetoric of hands from John Bulwer's *The Art of Manuall Rhetorique* that relates a semiotics of the conspirators' bloody hands in *Julius Caesar*, the severed hands in *Titus Andronicus* and of polemicist John Stubbs and of New World Natives, by way of bloodied hands like those of Macbeth and his lady. The following essays open with considerations of *Othello*, weaving in the importance of place, political and social and sexual position, so that questions of replacement and adulteration both refer to earlier essays and merge into questions of adultery and race, bestiality and alienation, colonization and empire. Then, colored by postcolonial thinkers and writers, accounts of colonizing savagery and imperialism in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, Purchas's *Pilgrims*, and other travel literature modulate into Fletcher's *The Island*

Princess and *The Sea-Voyage* with *The Tempest* before they turn to the colonization of the Irish in Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* and *The Faerie Queene*, John Derricke's *Image of Ireland* and other polemics, representations in the maps of John Speed and Richard Bartlett, thence back to Shakespeare's histories, particularly *Henry V*. Finally they weave through grammars and tracts advocating a uniform national language only to reemerge in travel as translation with Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The effects in Neill's collection, just like the multitudinous reports of the age of travel and discovery or of Ben Jonson's record of intellectual travel in *Timber, Or Discoveries*, are cumulative. Neill's strands, seemingly disparate, keep resurfacing in the tapestry through the social or political or economic framework or a cue from the connotations of a word or an image or an action represented as historical or fictive.

Neill's weaving displays radical conservatism or conservative radicalism. That is, he conserves history by asking it questions that reposition its roots and, as well, conserves older scholarly preoccupations and techniques as he takes up revisionary ones. Thus he scrutinizes linguistic nuance to consider social and political issues prominent during early performances. The etymology of adultery as corruption and counterfeiting leads through connotations of treachery into deformity and bastardy that continue to reappear. Forms of address, epithets, and pronoun references that signal service and status, then clashes of rank, also get interwoven. Programs for nascent nationalism bonded by a common language get reworked through dialect-breaking colonization in Ireland and France, then through Henry V's courtship of French Princess Catherine they are blended with masculine imperialism over women. The tracing of the imagery of flames that destroy the colonizer and torture the colonized employs yet another older technique to address newer questions. The iconographic history of staging and responding artistically to the final bedchamber scene in *Othello* opens up issues of race and subordination to the critiques of contemporary postcolonial novelists in new historical ways; these in turn open to other "discovery scenes." At the same time Neill extends the range of evidence and techniques that show off in plays, so that dictionaries and handbooks on behavior lead through rhetorics of the hand and gesture towards travel literature and then maps as propaganda for trade and emergent imperialism, interwoven all along with Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and Dekker's and Heywood's theatrical celebrations of citizen venture and venturer. Similarly political propaganda interweaves with maps, representations of locales, and local dress as Irish mantles of concealment and deception get threateningly appropriated as the cloak of surveillance in the Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth. Neill's historical evidence illuminates the plays and the plays shine forth on the historical evidence.

After hints all along, Neill's contribution to the theories of the discipline

emerges as one of the collection's central features in the eleventh, title, essay. "Putting History to the Question: An Episode of Torture at Bantam in Java, 1604" pays homage to new historicism as it submits to critical trial an anecdote Stephen Greenblatt retells to introduce *Learning to Curse*. The anecdote narrated in estrangement and wonder by Greenblatt then reinvestigated by Neill tells about torture. But the trial by fire of critical and historical method takes on the connotations of refinement, as of the precious metal of those chosen by God rather than the dross sentenced to annihilation. It thus employs as well the distinctly new historical move of exploiting the opening in the anecdote. Neill refuses to wonder but instead conducts an anatomy of the anecdote's historical conditions through the opening. He finds the English trial by fire and dismemberment of three thieves in their colony, particularly that of the mute Chinese Hinting, as comprehensible as it is horrifying. Paired anecdotes open up English terror of annihilation by fire and dread of mute treachery to interrogation by reciprocal torture, English desperation and embattlement in defense of their goods, their bodies, and their "civilized" identity from insidious alien pollution, English assertions of nascent nationhood and imperialism in self-righteous and racist aggressions by merchant adventurers the world over. Moreover, these revelations are enforced in the authors' recollections and recordings of the episode during a time of national English phobia and euphoria after the providential revelation of the Gunpowder Plot. Neill thus criticizes new historicism for concealing history in the wonders of narration when we need to be revealing history both then and now in analytic interrogations. He criticizes new historicism as well for lack of contextual and close reading, jumping to conclusions and submitting as evidence passages that do not carry our cultural associations. And he criticizes American new historicism's anachronistic imperial focus on the Atlantic New World to the neglect of early modern England's greater interest in the East and the Asian archipelago. Neill, however, makes these critiques by bringing to bear older historical and critical practices on new historicists, their interests, their materials, their techniques. He questions those he admires, offering an appreciation and supplying a probe in order to reform.

Neill therefore lays himself open, puts himself to the question. Like other strong critics, he leaves the archeological remains of his essays basically untouched, calling attention to earlier shortcomings in introductions and notes. "Some of [the essays] contain ideas and formulations with which I am no longer satisfied. . . . I have thought it best instead to let them bear the marks of their own histories. . . . They belong after all to a process of questioning in which the answers are invariably time-bound, provisional, and subject to endless reinterrogation" (9). The "Power" in Neill's subtitle indicates resubmissions to questioning of the "Politics" and "Society" that have constituted his

concerns from his early publications. He criticizes himself for not paying sufficient heed earlier to that power in the politics of nationalism and imperialism, racism, and sexism. And his note to an essay on *Othello* confesses that in an earlier essay “I ought to have noticed more clearly the way in which racial identity is constructed as one of the most fiercely contested ‘places’ in the play” (466). Individual critics will want to put other questions to Neill: for example, testing his sense of Massinger’s conservative patriarchalism based on the satiric comedies by an hypothesis of liberalizing reformation of patronage in the tragicomedies, or scrutinizing his melioration of Shakespeare’s presentation in *The Tempest* for its exposure of the machinery and machinations of fantasy. Neill invites such critiques by demonstrating the scholarly necessity of continually examining and learning from our changing points of view as we perpetually remake our history by reconsidering its traces. He models a scholar we can honor most by putting the historical insights and interpretations of his rich tapestry to the question.

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Truth and Consequences: Intentions, Conventions, and the New Thematics by Reed Way Dasenbrock. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001. Pp. 330 + xvii. \$65.00 cloth. \$25.00 paper.

Dasenbrock’s book is, primarily, a critique of relativism—or “conventionalism,” the doctrine that our interpretations and evaluations are determined by social conventions which we cannot escape. Conventionalism is, in Dasenbrock’s view, the dominant critical ideology today. He finds it conceptually incoherent and often bound up with rhetorical practices that are detrimental to productive intellectual discussion. Against this, Dasenbrock uses recent analytic philosophy to defend a form of intentionalism.

Given the confluence of our interests and attitudes on these topics (down to our shared admiration for the work of my former teacher, Donald Davidson), I expected to enjoy and admire Dasenbrock’s book. To some extent, I did. First, Dasenbrock has read extensively in analytic philosophy, especially Davidson. His book is likely to introduce new readers to this rich tradition.

Second, Dasenbrock neatly isolates and defines conventionalism. The tendencies he refers to are more or less the same as those commonly termed “relativist.” However, Dasenbrock’s term, and his definition, are more apt. They help to clarify the issues at stake. Also, he lucidly reiterates some of the standard arguments against relativism, now transferred to conventionalism.

He explains why claims that truth is relative to a paradigm or an interpretive community are self-undermining. When an official document of the ACLS critiques “claims of . . . universality” (36, quoting Levine, *et al.*), the authors are making a universal claim, as Dasenbrock notes. When Kuhn discusses the shifts from one paradigm to another, declaring their incommensurability, “There is . . . a dissonance between Kuhn’s stated position on the status of scientific observation and his own practice as an observer of science” (39). When Fish responds to the self-refutation argument, saying that the objection “mistakes the nature of the anti-foundationalist claim” (180, quoting Fish), Fish’s defense “suggests that antifoundationalist [or conventionalist] texts have a univocal meaning of a kind Fish denies” (180).

These are not logical tricks. They are genuine intellectual problems. How can Levine and his colleagues universally denounce claims of universality? If Chomsky has worked on a particular syntactic property, such as structure dependency, for years, and there is massive evidence that it is universal, why are Chomsky’s claims “not to be trusted” and seen “to reflect local historical conditions” (36, quoting Levine, *et al.*), while the equally universal judgment of Levine, *et al.*, is trustworthy? How can Kuhn understand many different scientific paradigms, while Einstein and other physicists cannot?

Beyond these points, I also appreciated Dasenbrock’s argument in favor of intentionalist interpretation. His reasoning here is not as forceful as one might wish. However, he does a good job of showing that everyone believes in intentionalist interpretation in certain cases. For instance, Derrida manifestly advocates intentionalist interpretation when he is the author being interpreted, as Dasenbrock demonstrates.

However, I find serious problems, even at those places where I am most sympathetic with the book. Consider the treatment of analytic philosophy. First, Dasenbrock sees this as much more central to American literary theory than seems plausible. Indeed, he contends that American literary critics draw their conventionalism from pre-Putnam, pre-Davidson analytic philosophy—leading to the problem that they are therefore “over thirty years out of date” (5). But American literary theorists almost certainly draw their ideas more from Romanticism than from positivism. It is Shelley and Coleridge, influenced by German Idealism and discussing poetic imagination, that lead American critics to believe we make the world through language. It isn’t Otto Neurath. Yes, American critics have been happy to pick up anyone from the “other camp” who seems to agree with the Romantic idea. Thus, they have been enthusiastic about Kuhn. But this is not because American critics were formed as analytic philosophers.

Moreover, Dasenbrock’s history of analytic philosophy is itself highly misleading. He characterizes Anglo-American philosophy as largely conventionalist before Putnam and Davidson. But for every positivist who was

conventionalist, there was another who was not. Wittgenstein can be interpreted in quite different ways, and has been by prominent followers. Before Putnam and Davidson, the analytic tradition was a mix of conventionalist and non-conventionalist positions. And it remains so. Indeed, Putnam himself moved from being a “metaphysical realist” to an “internal realist”—a position that some believe to be conventionalist. Nor does this philosophical tradition end with Davidson and Putnam. What about cognitivism? What about the recent, politicized realism of, say, Bhaskar?

I am also uncomfortable with the idea that being “out of date” is an argument against anything. Dasenbrock rightly rejects the implicit contention of Fish and Barbara Herrnstein Smith that truth is whatever sells (182–83, 249). But there is an element of that contention in any argument that invokes being “out of date.”

As to the main criticisms of conventionalism, my qualms here have to do with the fact that they are already so familiar. Certainly Dasenbrock is free to repeat standard arguments. And he does add new twists. But they are still the same, familiar arguments. Moreover, he does not do a good job of acknowledging this. Indeed, like some poet analyzed by Harold Bloom, he seems intent on denouncing the very writers who have influenced him. He is dismissive of Searle, who, in Dasenbrock’s view, suffers from a “failure to understand” (274 n.18) not only Derrida, but some basic principles of language. He never cites details of Searle’s theory, nor does he engage in anything like a serious treatment of his broader principles. Or consider Dasenbrock’s relation to Hirsch. To take one small instance, Dasenbrock criticizes the idea that “the interpreter is . . . imprisoned in a circle” (75). This discussion is certainly reminiscent of Hirsch’s critique of the closed hermeneutic circle. But Dasenbrock’s only references to Hirsch involve asserting “the substantive differences separating me from Hirsch” (155). More generally, Dasenbrock contends that “The primary role played by analytic philosophy today is as additional philosophical support for positions aligned with poststructuralism” (xiii). By saying this, he in effect relieves himself of any obligation to discuss other literary theorists who draw on analytic philosophy in non-conventionalist ways.

Finally, I find Dasenbrock’s notion of intentionalism to be problematic. Most important, he is not clear as to what he means by “intention.” Intention is not just one thing. There are different individuals and groups relevant to the discussion of any text. Even one person, even one author of one work, has different sorts of intention. To say that interpretation of word meaning should be governed by authorial intention is very different from saying that interpretation should be guided by the author’s self-conscious thematic goals. There are differences between unconscious and conscious authorial intent, productive and receptive intent, the intent to make a positive change and the intent to accept an editorial addition or deletion, etc. Consider legal interpretation.

In addition to the multiple and complex intents of those who drafted the legislation, there are for instance the intents of those who voted to implement it and those who qualified it with subsequent legislation; in both cases, these acts effectively involved a re-intention of the initial text. Then, for each of these intending individuals, there are intended extensions of words or phrases, intended definitions, intended policy aims, and so on. It is not enough to isolate intention, even authorial intention, as the goal of interpretation. One must clarify just what sorts of intention are at stake and how one might adjudicate among them (I have discussed this point in detail in *On Interpretation: Meaning and Inference in Law, Psychoanalysis, and Literature* [Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996]).

Dasenbrock does draw distinctions between varieties of intentionalism. But this hardly clarifies matters. Fish is a “universal” intentionalist because he believes that we all look for intention, though this makes no practical difference. Hirsch is a “positive” intentionalist, evidently because he looks for intentions positively, though what this means is unclear. Dasenbrock distinguishes his intentionalism from these alternatives in two ways. First, he adds to intention the notion of truth. This is very strange. Is he suggesting that Hirsch looks for intentions but is just as happy to find a false intention as a true one? Even Fish is looking for true intentions—though, of course, for him truth is only truth for a particular community or the like.

The other difference is that Dasenbrock sees intention functioning only in “disconfirmation.” He goes so far as to claim that “Intention can play no useful role—can only play a disruptive role—in the confirmation of interpretive theses. . . . But it can play an extremely useful role in the disconfirmation of hypotheses” (171). Dasenbrock cites Bork’s concern with the original intention of the constitution to show that a confirmatory attitude is disruptive. But this makes no sense. First of all, Dasenbrock’s own brief discussion of Bork indicates that Bork was not interpreting law in a way constrained by intention. Bork was simply interpreting by his own preferences, then referring to these preferences as the original intent. Moreover, Bork’s major claims are disconfirmatory. For example, he would insist that, regarding the Fourteenth Amendment, the forbidding of discrimination based on, say, sexual orientation, “could not possibly be what the author meant.” “Could not possibly be what the author meant” is precisely Dasenbrock’s “falsificationist” criterion (170).

But in a sense, this doesn’t matter anyway. Dasenbrock does not really mean that intention has a useful role in disconfirmation only. Rather, he fully believes that we interpret positively for intention. It is just that we assume the speaker means what his/her words ordinarily mean, unless we have reason to believe the contrary, in which case we interpret for some *idiosyncratic* intention (see 172). Intention does not disconfirm anything here—except insofar as our best, *positive* hypothesis about intent seems to require rejecting ordinary word

meaning. This is what happens when someone says, "Put the milk in the oven" and we say, "You mean, the refrigerator?"

Thus Dasenbrock does not, in my view, successfully distinguish his type of intentionalism, nor does he genuinely advance our understanding of intention in this discussion. Indeed, he only makes matters worse by insisting that our inference to idiosyncratic intention is "unsystematic"—as if substituting "refrigerator" for "oven" were merely random. Moreover, the entire issue is muddled by Dasenbrock's strange discussion of "objective truth." According to Dasenbrock, "Objective truth arises from . . . discussion"; the process of reflection, testing, revision, etc., "creates the objectivity of the result" (166). This seems to be precisely what he was arguing against. Dasenbrock cites Davidson in support of this view, but his quotes from Davidson all refer to an *attitude* of objectivity, not to objective truth. Davidson indicates that individual bias may be balanced by collective debate, testing, revision, etc.—not that "Objective truth arises from this."

Despite these weaknesses, and some others—such as a serious misrepresentation of Althusser—Dasenbrock has written a book that discusses significant issues more clearly and coherently, and probably with more truth, than most works in literary theory today.

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At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture by James E. Young. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000. Pp. viii + 248. \$35.00 cloth.

James E. Young's latest work, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, marks a shift in his critical gaze from the literary and historical realm to that of art and architecture. However, the issues at stake here—the challenge of memory in the face of catastrophe, the precariousness of Holocaust memory in particular, the politics involved in memorial acts—are familiar terrain for Young. In this book, he explores Holocaust memory as it is being articulated both by a younger generation of artists and architects—those who have only a vicarious relationship to the event itself—and in an "antiredemptory age." In the first part of the book, one chapter each is devoted to Art Spiegelman, David Levinthal, and Shimon Attie, three American artists. In each case, Young considers how the artist came to know about the Holocaust, and how that knowledge shaped his life and work. These

artists face a double challenge. First, they must find a way to articulate memories of a catastrophic event through which they did not live but which has come to be real to them through a range of narratives, including films, photos, histories, novels, poems, plays and survivor testimonies. Second, they must conceive of and design a memorial act that is anti-redemptive, that resists at all moments the aestheticization of the Holocaust. The second half of the book explores such acts of anti-redemptive countermemory in Germany, where the struggle to contend with Holocaust memory is particularly vexing. The works of the artists and architects he considers actively resist traditional monumental forms; they provoke rather than console. Horst Hoheisel, Micha Ullman, Rachel Whiteread, Renata Stih, Frieder Schnock, Jochen Gerz, and others have struggled to challenge and in some ways reinvent the monumental form itself, producing what Young refers to as the “countermonument.” The final two chapters of the book examine the obstacles, both aesthetic and political, to Daniel Libeskind’s construction of The Jewish Museum Extension to the Berlin Museum, and to Peter Eisenman’s design for a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, respectively. Through these local analyses, Young explores both what form vicarious memory of the Holocaust takes, and whether it is “possible to enshrine an antimemorial impulse in monumental forms” (10).

The American artists considered in the first part of the book hail from a generation temporally and geographically removed from the Holocaust. Apart from Spiegelman’s *Maus*, the projects Young analyzes have not received widespread public attention; part of the significance of Young’s book is that it further disseminates these lesser known, but crucially important memory acts. Young finds that what ultimately gets memorialized in these artworks is not only the event, what happened, but its transmission, how it was passed down to the artists. Furthermore, inherent in these projects is an ambivalence towards the “entire memory enterprise” (35). David Levinthal’s work highlights the extent to which his memory of the Holocaust has been mediated; he photographs toy soldiers which he has posed in accordance with the Holocaust images handed down to him. His 1977 piece, *Hitler Moves East*, a collaboration with Garry Trudeau, attempted to narrate Operation Barbarossa. As Young describes it, “instead of using images directly drawn from archival sources, they created their own ‘archival’ images by photographing Levinthal’s toys in carefully staged war scenarios” (48). Importantly, each image they constructed was inspired by *remembered* images and photographs. By blurring the images they were able to create the effect of movement and action. In his 1994–96 piece *Mein Kampf*, Levinthal took oversized Polaroid photographs of Nazi toy soldiers and their figurine victims, which he had painstakingly posed. Young focuses on a particular image of a woman “cradling a child” and “whirling away” from a Nazi bullet; Levinthal’s image is borrowed from a well known, disturbing photograph taken by an S.S. photographer on the Eastern

Front. As Young points out, Levinthal is reminding us that “his images are of other images” (54). In this economy of images, Young writes, “the Nazi photograph has itself become part of the iconic currency of the Holocaust” (54). Levinthal’s photographs, several of which are beautifully reproduced for Young’s volume, articulate both the horror and exploitation of the confrontation between Nazis and Jews, as well as Levinthal’s own “hypermediated reality of the Holocaust” (45).

What Young sees in *Sites Unseen*, Shimon Attie’s European installations between 1991 and 1996, is a deliberate attempt to repeople a decimated landscape. This is one of several Attie projects Young explores. For Attie, Young writes, “memory of a site’s past does not emanate from within a place but is more likely the projection of the mind’s eye onto a given site. Without the historical consciousness of visitors, these sites remain essentially indifferent to their pasts, altogether amnesiac. They ‘know’ only what we know, ‘remember’ only what we remember” (62). Those like Shimon Attie who know the history (and who are willing to remember it) walk through the streets of Berlin seeing ghosts of the absent Jews. For the many others who do not see the ghosts, whose minds do not project images of a population eradicated, Attie’s installation, *Writing on the Wall, Berlin*, made them visible. He quite literally projected archival photographs of “a now-lost Jewish past onto otherwise forgetful sites” (64). While the installation itself with the projection of life-size photographs only lasted for a short time, Attie hopes that his images will continue to haunt the sites. Photographs of the installations, several of which are reproduced in Young’s book, are meant to serve the same function and to expand the reach of his project beyond those who witnessed the installations in situ. Attie’s attempt to reinscribe a trace of Jewish life where it was eradicated by the Holocaust is reminiscent of Claude Lanzmann’s project in the film *Shoah*. Attie, like Lanzmann, was troubled by the absolute absence of traces of previous Jewish existence in the places where they lived; each artist attempted to return a trace, to name those that were obliterated. By describing Attie’s work and including photographs of the installations, Young further extends the artist’s project, increasing the number of people who will be haunted by the images—images that will help to restore a piece of history both forgotten and repressed.

For a historian of the memorial, Germany is fertile ground. While Young has elsewhere explored the particular problems Germany confronts in memorializing the past, particularly in his 1993 work, *The Texture of Memory*, his current book covers much new ground. He analyzes a series of memorials in Germany, which, while quite varied in form and content, are all “countermonuments,” that is, “memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premise of the monument” (96). Unlike more traditional monuments which tend to seal off memory, these attempt to “sear” memory into public consciousness. They

are meant to “return the burden of memory to the visitors themselves by forcing visitors into an active role” (118).

One of the great values of Young’s book is that it reveals and makes permanent the diverse textures of recent memorial acts in Germany, many of which are otherwise inaccessible as local installations, or fundamentally transient in form. For example, Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock’s *Memorial to the Departed Jewish Citizens of the Bayerische Viertel, Bayerische Platz, Berlin* (1993) consisted of eighty signposts that were mounted on streets and sidewalks all around Bayerische Platz; each sign included a simple image from everyday life, such as a red park bench on a green lawn, along with a short text excerpted from Germany’s anti-Jewish laws of the 1930s and ’40s, such as “Jews may sit only on yellow park benches” (114). The power of the installation derived from the fact that it was completely unannounced, leading many residents to call the police, believing the signs to be the work of neo-Nazis. The signs were mounted one or two at a time to “remind local citizens that the murder of the neighborhood’s Jews did not happen overnight, or in one fell swoop, but over time—and with the tacit acknowledgment of their neighbors” (116). Through this installment, Stih and Schnock integrated memorialization into the “rhythms of everyday life” (116).

In the final chapter, Young examines the political and aesthetic dimensions of the struggle to design and build a *Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe*, a struggle in which he was personally involved. As an expert on memorialization, Young was asked to be part of the Findungskommission. While at first dubious about the very idea of such a memorial, he came to realize the importance of a monument deliberately designed to remember the genocide, not one, like those at the concentration camps, built on a space designed by the killers themselves. While Young does analyze Peter Eisenman’s winning design, and the memorial that ensued, what I found most interesting and important about this chapter was that he exposed the enormously complicated process of selecting a memorial and thereby made visible the work of many artists and architects who did not actually get the commission. By describing their proposals and including illustrations of their models, Young pays tribute to the work of a series of talented artists, but more important, gives an afterlife to their compelling designs.

At Memory’s Edge is a powerful and important foray into the second generation’s art and architecture of memorialization. Given the danger of aestheticizing or beautifying the Holocaust, one hates to tout the attractiveness of a book on Holocaust memorials, but this book is beautiful. Filled with dozens of color photographs, Young’s book brings to life the memorial acts he so thoughtfully describes and analyzes.

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Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity by David S. Ferris. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000. Pp. xxix + 247. \$49.50 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

Silent Urns is a difficult, complex, and challenging book that requires considerable intellectual stamina from its reader. It is also an original and compelling critical study that breaks important new ground in a variety of areas, including European Romanticism and its relation to the past, the relation of aesthetics to politics, and contemporary historicist theories of literature and culture. As its subtitle suggests, the book's argument is sweeping, and part of the difficulty of the study rests in Ferris's effort to construct a critical and theoretical strategy capable of containing the reach of that argument: there is simply no easy way to distill the range of issues that Ferris seeks to connect and explain.

The study is organized around the issue of Hellenism. Ferris contends that Romantic Hellenism is not simply a question of Romanticism's relation to ancient Greece. Rather, it is a historically specific phenomenon that arises in the eighteenth century under the profound influence of Johann Winckelmann, whose *History of Ancient Art* (1764) sought to integrate and explain various pressing and emergent issues of the period, ranging from aesthetics, to history, to the quest for freedom. As the focal point of Winckelmann's study, Hellenism is constructed as the original cultural expression within which these issues are reconciled, and it therefore assumes the identity of an authoritative standard of value and category of explanation; that is to say, it is constructed and represented not as identical with the historical reality of Greece, but as the definitive concept of culture that governs and mediates historical understanding. In its role as a perfect form of cultural expression, Hellenism becomes the ideal against which both Romanticism and modernity itself are measured for their cultural and aesthetic achievements.

But even as he constructs Hellenism as an ideal standard for Romanticism and modernity, Winckelmann at the same time binds that point of reference to the national context of Greece itself, and thereby ties it to the fate of the Greek nation. Thus, although Hellenism is an ideal standard of measurement, it is also framed by its historical situation. The historical embeddedness of Hellenism is crucial to Winckelmann's argument, for by linking Hellenic culture and Greek history, aesthetics and nation, as he does, Winckelmann assures the inimitability of Hellenism, and thereby solidifies its unique and ideal status. Because the supreme accomplishments of Hellenism are inextricably tied to the failure of the Greek nation to sustain its artistic authority without end, they come to occupy a sort of protected and unapproachable cultural zone that

subsequent history can only imagine but never truly capture. This argument has significant repercussions for art and culture in modernity in another way as well; just as the failure of the Greek nation assures the unique status of the Hellenic past by isolating it as an ideal moment ostensibly out of time, it also assures that modernity cannot repeat the successes of Hellenism without also repeating its complete ruin. In this view, paradoxically, Greece provides the first example of modernity, while at the same time pointing toward the characteristic feature of modernity: a return to Greece, or to an ideal in the past, is impossible.

What matters for Ferris in this view of Hellenism is that ancient Greece, as a geographic and historically specific country, is less important than the fact that its cultural achievement provides a point of reference for critical judgment, and thereby an authority with which the present must contend in seeking its own identity. It is not as history but rather as a model of history that Hellenism matters. Specifically, Hellenism is a model of history that, according to Ferris, “owes its existence to an account of how style develops as an indicator of historical change” (54). With its emphasis on the link between history and style, Hellenism represents an ideal form—an aesthetic model—of historical development itself.

Moreover, as an ideal and original source of aesthetic representation and accomplishment, the Hellenic past is defined most emphatically by its divorce from the present. Thus the literary history that follows from it is established not simply by the historical fact of ancient Greece, but by the definitive separation of its accomplishments from subsequent history; and this literary history must be understood by the fact that this separation can never be overcome. The failure to overcome this separation is the defining characteristic of modernity. In other words, for Ferris Hellenism is not simply a desire to return to an ideal past; it represents the impossibility of satisfying that desire as well, and in this impossibility Hellenism represents the historical reality of modernity. If Hellenism constitutes a model of historical understanding, it is an understanding of separation, and of failure.

Ferris’s effort to re-situate our understanding of Hellenism away from a notion of a pure aesthetic expression to be imitated by subsequent history towards a model of history as represented by the aesthetic has significant consequences for contemporary theory and criticism, especially their efforts to negotiate questions of historicity and culture. Ferris is specifically concerned with the turn in materialist criticism toward ideology as a way of unmasking “true” historical contradictions. Ideological criticism, Ferris argues, arises at that moment when linguistic and textual criticism give way to an urgent concern for political and historical issues. In their concern with politics and history, he argues, ideological critics have tended to see Hellenism as an ideological construct that deforms “real” history and puts in its place a pure

sphere of beauty into which subsequent artists—specifically artists of the Romantic period—would escape. These critics, in other words, denounce Romantic Hellenism for its inability to account fully for the historical and political realities that constitute Romantic expression.

The problem with the way ideological critics formulate issues of history is that in putting forward history as a determining influence on the significance of literature it effectively erases the function of the historical nature of the aesthetic. Ideological criticism (represented in Ferris's study by Jerome McGann, among others) wishes to free itself from the controls exerted by the aesthetic, by a fiction of the past—Hellenism—in an effort to offer up a “pure,” “real,” or “true” historical explanation, but in so doing it fails to recognize the way and the extent to which the aesthetic guides and enables their critical insights. The belittling of the aesthetic that characterizes so much ideological criticism does not mark the triumph of criticism, but rather the ongoing authority that the aesthetic exercises on questions of history and literature. As Ferris puts it, “The historical and political are dialectically tied to the mode of representation they must both refuse. Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* transformed this contradiction into a history of failure through which modernity may continually assert itself as the pattern of Hellenism repeats itself. Our modernity has merely reformulated this failure as ideology” (57).

In developing his own historicist theory of Hellenism, Ferris seeks to avoid what he considers to be the pitfalls of modern criticism by realigning history and aesthetics in such a way that the aesthetic would be viewed as “the rhetoric of the political, rather than an ideology to be opposed to history” (80). His readings of Keats, Schelling, Shelley, and Hölderlin demonstrate what such a theory might look like when it becomes practice: art becomes performance (among other things), demonstrating the conditions under which the political and the historical may be achieved in the cultural object; art expresses the danger of becoming trapped by its own myths, despite its distancing of those myths through aesthetic representation; art shows the means of negotiating the complicated relation between memory and thought as a way of negotiating the historical complexities of the relations between past and present.

In sum, Ferris seeks to recover a notion of the aesthetic that ideological criticism too often rejects, while holding on to a history that is represented in the aesthetic object. Hellenism—and Winckelmann's argument in particular—provides the context within which Ferris carries out this effort. While his argument is difficult, it is also compelling, and it warrants careful study insofar as it offers the possibility of reinvigorating studies in Romanticism at a moment when ideological criticism appears to be losing much of its force.

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Contemporary Irish Fiction: Themes, Tropes, Theories, edited by Liam Harte and Michael Parker. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Pp. xi + 271. \$49.95 cloth.

This is a collection of a dozen essays, by as many different scholars, on Irish fiction (mostly novels) since about 1960, particularly of the 1980s and 1990s, with some references back to earlier parts of the twentieth century. On the one hand, as perhaps with any such collection, it is a diverse rather than unified book, with some essays stronger and more interesting than others, as detailed below. On the other hand, more specifically than the generic title on its cover, this book slants in a particular direction and, co-published and edited by Macmillan in London, it might as well have been subtitled something like "British and Irish scholars do theory." With the sole exception of one Canadian, it appears from the contributors' notes that these are natives of Ireland and Britain (teaching mostly on that side of the Atlantic), giving the book a fairly inward-looking cast that seems slightly odd in this increasingly globalized age. Even more specifically, the editors and several of their fellow contributors seem to have emerged out of the Raymond Williams school of British cultural studies (though some contributors have different orientations). The earnest determination here to "do theory" is reflected in the book's subtitle—the word "tropes" does not invite the general reader—and the very dense, British-styled notes attached to the essays. This is not a book destined to make contemporary Irish fiction more accessible to a wider readership; these are specialist critics talking only to other specialist critics. While they discuss quite a few authors, the editors admit in their introduction that this collection is in no way comprehensive; for example, it does not discuss William Trevor, one of the most important contemporary Irish novelists.

The feminist essays in this collection are among its strongest contributions. "Figuring the Mother in Contemporary Irish Fiction" is a detailed, searching study by Ann Owens Weekes, a pioneering scholar of Irish women writers. This essay is distinguished by the wide sweep of her historical knowledge. After outlining the relevant contexts of the misogynist Irish Free State and the points of view of such earlier authors as O'Casey, Kate O'Brien, and Somerville and Ross, Weekes focuses on Mary Lavin, Edna O'Brien, Jennifer Johnston, and Clare Boylan, working her way from Lavin's *Mary O'Grady* (1950) all the way to Johnston's *The Illusionist* (1995). She concludes that these writers "have given voice to their own, but not to their mothers' generation" (121), finding new freedom for themselves but leaving the women of the earlier Free State—which was anything but free for women—essentially voiceless.

Whereas Weekes concentrates on mothers and daughters, Christine St Peter's complementary essay, "Petrifying Time: Incest Narratives from Contemporary Ireland," is devoted to "father-daughter incest in Irish fiction" (125), showing how Edna O'Brien, for example, has become increasingly politicized in her attacks on that problem in such novels as *Down by the River* (1996). (Trevor may be ignored in this book, but Edna O'Brien is cited by several of the essayists.) Antoinette Quinn's chapter on Emma Donoghue examines her lesbian novels *Stir-fry* (1994) and *Hood* (1995), celebrating a fresh perspective that is politicized but not doctrinaire: Donoghue refuses to "construct a monument" either "to gay pride or to gay victimization," advocating "mutual understanding and acceptance," critiquing "lesbian separatism" and bringing "the Irish lesbian novel out of the ghetto" (164).

Gender issues in male writers are given attention in this book as well. In "Re-citing the Rosary: Women, Catholicism and Agency in Brian Moore's *Cold Heaven* and John McGahern's *Amongst Women*," Siobhán Holland concludes that both these prominent novels expose "patriarchal discourses about women." And Joseph McMinn ends "Versions of Banville: Versions of Modernism," an essay that mostly emphasizes how devoted Banville has been to "art for art's sake," with a tantalizing though brief discussion of his "representation of women" (93), suggesting that "there is a self-critical kind of misogyny within Banville's fiction" (95).

Especially in view of these thoughtful discussions of gender issues, it is surprising that the editors themselves seem to be wearing blinders on gender in their own final essay, "Reconfiguring Identities: Recent Northern Irish Fiction." Despite that broad title, Harte and Parker actually limit themselves to just two novels, Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness* (1996) and Bernard MacLaverty's *Grace Notes* (1997). Their attention to these two recent works' impetus toward Northern reconciliation is commendable and upbeat, but especially after reading such incisive analyses of gender issues in earlier chapters, here the reader expects Harte and Parker to mention the fact that one novel was written by a woman and the other by a man and suggest what significance that fact might hold for us. It may be very well to unify Madden and MacLaverty under the banner of a supposedly progressive new way forward for Northern Ireland, but would it not also be worth considering how gender issues play a role in their novels, especially after we have been sensitized to such issues by previous essays? These concerns were certainly brought to the editors' attention. Their selection of one female author and one male author in their own essay creates the expectation that gender would at least come up, but it never does, leaving the reader with an unfinished feeling at the end of their book.

Closely allied to Harte and Parker's essay is Richard Kirkland's "Bourgeois Redemptions: The Fictions of Glenn Patterson and Robert McLiam Wilson,"

which attends to two very recent writers in need of discussion, but is cluttered with Marxist jargon (beginning with a page of Trotsky) to the point that it becomes difficult to appreciate and see Patterson and Wilson through the tangle of Kirkland's rhetoric. A much more accessible analysis is offered by Richard Haslam in "The Pose Arranged and Lingered Over": Visualizing the 'Troubles,'" which critiques, for example, the "photographic" point of view of MacLaverty's *Cal*, in which voyeurism and violence come together, thus linking gender and sectarian issues.

At this point, thinking about contemporary Irish fiction, one might imagine that it's mostly all about women and the "Troubles." But not quite. Tom Herron retreats from the North to a differently troubled Southern republic in "ContamiNation: Patrick McCabe and Colm Tóibín's Pathographies of the Republic," reading them as "articulating many of the tensions, elisions and contradictions within twentieth-century Irish politics and culture that have become the focus of revisionist attention" (171). Gerry Smyth zeroes in on Dublin, explaining how "Northside realists" such as Dermot Bolger and Roddy Doyle have had to overcome both the traditionally Irish pious preference for the countryside over the city and the Joycean image of a Dublin quite unlike the gritty streets of, for example, Doyle's novels. For many of us, to think "Dublin" is to think "Joyce," but Smyth rightly points out that in fact, in the case of this overgrown capital, we are now "witnessing the dissolution of the traditional idea of the city and the advent of a related but radically altered urban space for which the word 'Dublin' is no longer adequate" (21).

For many others, to be Irish is to be exiled, living and writing elsewhere, as George O'Brien perceptively considers in "The Aesthetics of Exile," which begins, "It seems only a slight exaggeration to say that without exile there would be no contemporary Irish fiction." Much like Ann Weekes's chapter, this one is informed by the spacious scope of O'Brien's analysis, which takes into account developments in Irish society and the Irish novel over time, as part of understanding the novels of John McGahern, Brian Moore, Edna O'Brien, Ian Cochrane, Colm Tóibín, and Colum McCann (among others). He concludes by quoting Joseph O'Connor: "Being an emigrant isn't just an address [. . .] it's actually a way of thinking about Ireland." O'Brien intuitively understands these writers because he is himself a southern Irish native living and teaching in America. Editor of a recent special issue of the *Colby Quarterly* on contemporary Irish fiction, he knows and cites some of the best work on the subject from both sides of the Atlantic, in this otherwise often British-focused collection of essays.

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