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## Book Reviews

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### Book Reviews

*Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity* by Seyla Benhabib and Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997. Pp. ix + 305. \$35.00, cloth; \$17.00, paper.

*The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault* by Hans Herbert Kögler. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. Pp. 322. \$35.00.

The reception of Jürgen Habermas's work presents a certain paradox. Habermas is widely recognized as having developed the most ambitious and fully articulated version of a critical theory of society, one that incorporates work from anthropology, linguistics, sociology, and psychoanalysis into a framework sensitive to the linguistic turn in philosophy and postempiricist currents in twentieth-century thought. However, his particular formulations have attracted a good deal of criticism, and his program for a formal pragmatics that would replace ideology-critique, as well as his diagnosis of the pathologies of modernity as stemming from blocking communication or the colonization of the life-world, have inspired little research. In contrast with the broad influence of the best-known postwar French thinkers, Habermas's direct influence is mostly limited to the work of close colleagues and students.

In the culmination of his early work, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas locates the normative foundations of a critical theory in the formal conditions of communication, in particular the purported necessity of the attempt to reach mutual understanding. This conception of communicative action, and the richer conception of reason associated with it, illuminate and correct Max Weber's pessimism concerning modernity, which was adopted by the first generation of critical theorists, such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who for Habermas tacitly modeled reason as such solely on instrumental reason, the human appropriation and transformation of nature. The critical resistance to Habermas's program has centered on dissatisfaction with the claim that appeal to the validity presupposed in each communicative act can achieve the goals intended by earlier theorists' ideology-critique without reference to concrete social practices, human needs and desires, configurations of power, actual social groups, and substantive conceptions of happiness and the good. This rejection of the features of "universality, ideality, and transcendence" in Habermas's work helps explain the resistance of philosophers to his account and the lack of interest in sociology and cultural studies in pursuing research in its terms.

Following the publication of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas broadened his account of modernity from the internal critique of Weber to a full-fledged defense of modernity as the uncompleted project of enlightenment, a defense given most fully in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* through a critical examination of Hegel, Nietzsche, Bataille, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and Castoriadis. For Habermas, Hegel in his Jena period gives the best expression of the project of modernity: human happiness and autonomy are to be secured through intersubjective recognition. But Hegel in his mature thought spoiled this insight by incorporating it into the framework of an absolutist philosophy of Spirit modeled on the productive self-externalization and reappropriation of a subject conceived monologically. Nietzsche abandons Hegel's insight for the project of radical self-overcoming

through an aestheticist cultivation of self-dissolution in ecstatic experience and a hermeneutic suspicion toward claims to reason so total as to undermine the self-justification of any form of critique. Heidegger reinterprets the concept of truth as disclosure and thereby loses the dimension of intersubjective testing, and so he disengages any disclosure from either rational motivation or normative justification.

Habermas finds in each thinker hints of a notion of communicative reason that are left undeveloped in favor of a philosophy of the subject that valorizes ecstatic self-dissolution in holistic, transsubjective, and uncriticizable world-disclosures. The initial orientation toward the philosophy of the subject, and the confusion of instrumental reason with reason as such, leads to increasingly desperate attempts at self-abnegation and orientation to a mysterious, indeed ineffable "other" only partially approximated through a methodological *via negativa*. For Habermas, will, Being, the body, nonidentity, power, and difference are the successive divine names of the mystical theology of counter-modernity.

The essays collected in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity* characteristically make two responses to Habermas's account. Most try to show that Habermas first of all misconstrued the intentions and arguments of the philosophical modernists. Where Habermas argues that the mature Hegel abandoned the earlier account of ethical totality, and so the conceptual framework for a nascent articulation of the normative content of modernity, in favor of a conception of spirit modeled on the Fichtean positing and self-positing subject, Fred Dallmayr counters that spirit is best understood as "a metaphysical or ontological category," not as a super-subject, and thus is best understood as a "dimension" that is presupposed by both subjective capacities and objective rational principles, and within which both are reconciled through experience. Both James Schmidt and Jay Bernstein respond to Habermas's charge that Foucault was unable to legitimate historical criticisms due to his reduction of claims of truth to relations of power by noting that Foucault's unwillingness to give general grounds for criticisms follows from his insistence that there are no such grounds; criticism is always local and particular. In addition, Bernstein claims that Habermas, due to his inadequate understanding of the centrality of aesthetic concerns in modernity, misses the way in which Foucault, like the other thinkers Habermas discusses, relies on techniques and procedures of modernist art in presenting criticisms through affective imagery, irony, and negation. Modernist philosophers develop individualized vocabularies, imagistic discourses, and irreducibly local and context-specific presentations precisely in order to demonstrate the underdetermination of political judgments by universalistic rules, and to invoke the suppressed dimensions of the body, affect, sensuality, and power in modern life.

As Bernstein's essay shows, the attempt to rescue the modernists' discourse of otherness from Habermas's criticisms requires not just an appeal to the philosophers' intentions, but also a sketch of an alternative account of philosophical modernity and a diagnosis of Habermas's misprisions from that perspective. In his introduction, Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves offers such an account, taking up Stephen K. White's influential distinction between theories oriented toward explicating responsibility for action and those oriented to-

ward responsibility for otherness. While the former are guided by the pragmatic imperatives of collective deliberation and action toward public issues, the latter attempt to recall and preserve the aspects and features of any situation that the orientation toward action sets aside. The clearest example of such a distinction is between political theories that take distributive justice, as opposed to individualizing care, as their focal concern, and deontological ethical theories of the philosophical modernists, contrasted with those such as Emmanuel Levinas's or Knud Logstrup's, which focus on the infinite vulnerability of concrete others. Habermas is clearly more concerned with the former political theories, and the modernists from Nietzsche to the present with the latter ethical ones.

In general, Habermas sees modernist philosophers as driven to aporia and performative contradictions—between their implicit claims to truth and seriousness on the one hand, and their explicit rejection of the value of truth, rationality, and reasoned public discussion on the other. His critics, however, are willing to grant the modernists a kind of thinking more responsive than Habermas's rationalism to the pervasive anomie and alienation in modern culture, and more sensitive to the possibility of recognizing subtle patterns of domination and the mute claims of otherness.

What emerges from this sympathetic collective critique of Habermas's reconstruction of philosophical modernity is a near-total rejection of his claim to have circumscribed the discourse of otherness by means of a demonstration of the "inevitable" failures and aporias of a totalizing critique of reason. The force of Habermas's critique depends on a prior acceptance of his program of formal pragmatics as fully explicating the Hegelian account of the partitioned ethical totality as the starting point of critical theory, along with an acceptance of the insuperability of distinct value spheres in modernity. This does not, however, lead to a complete rejection of Habermas's project, for Habermas has uniquely stressed the importance of the Hegelian account as a way of explicating the modern demands for freedom, equality, and happiness, and for diagnosing the various inquiries of domination and nonrecognition. From his first book, we may recall, he has linked the unfulfilled demands of modernity to the tension within institutions between actual procedures and normative claims. Finally, if his accounts of individual modernist philosophers are partial and inadequate, the force of particular criticisms remains.

A good example of how Habermas's thought can be taken up fruitfully can be found in Hans Herbert Kögler's *The Power of Dialogue*. Kögler attempts to show how the actual practices of the human sciences can embody the intentions of critical theory without recourse either to ideology-critique or to formal pragmatics. Kögler takes the results of dialogue between members of distinct traditions as the best guide to what critique without unredeemable transcendental guarantees might accomplish. Kögler cites an intuition of the "critical potential freed up through dialogue" expressed by Karl Lowith: "Only in conversation does the certain basis of one's own discourse freely experience uncertainty through the encounter with the discourse of another, and this experience is not replaceable through any kind of self-examination or self-critique" (288, n. 14). Cross-cultural dialogue both facilitates the bringing to light of one's own unexamined prejudices, and

ties the emergent understanding to the needs, desires, and canons of intelligibility of the interlocutor. The problem of a transcendental grounding of critique thereby vanishes, and the tendency of critical theory to objectify its addressees as cultural dopes is finessed.

The adoption of the standpoint of critique through dialogue is an ethical decision, not the result of theoretical insight, that is motivated by the acceptance of something like Habermas's normative content of modernity. It also reflects a recognition of the partial incommensurability of non-Western traditions with Western traditions, as well as the loss of the binding power of tradition in modernity and the *de facto* internal plurality of Western tradition. For Kögler, the framework of this account is supported by a version of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics freed from its orientation toward consensus and its unitarist understanding of tradition, supplemented as well by the model of local, finite historical critique advanced by Foucault.

It is in Kögler's superb discussion of Gadamer that the productive influence of Habermas is best seen. Gadamer attempts to explicate hermeneutic experience first through his central claim that "Being that is understood is language," and then through the characterization of language use as transsubjective, in three senses: 1) any particular use of language presupposes a holistic background disclosure that can never be fully articulated or *a fortiori* criticized; 2) dialogic language use is fundamentally "egoless" in that it is "formally directed toward intersubjectivity" and presupposes a shared preunderstanding between interlocutors; and 3) dialogic process is modeled on play, wherein language users are absorbed in their roles and mutually constitute an event whose meaning is independent of the intentions of any participant. Combining these claims with the assumption that dialogue is oriented toward consensus, however, Gadamer is unable to explicate the sense in which dialogic experience can produce new meaning and new sorts of understandings, and not necessarily merely deeper awareness of and consensus on prior disclosed meanings.

Kögler follows Habermas's criticisms in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* of Heidegger's reinterpretation of truth as holistic world-disclosure as insufficiently acknowledging the possibility of a reflective distancing from prior meanings through raising the question of their validity. Having introduced the need to account for the fact of understanding incommensurable meanings through the examples of cross-cultural understanding; descriptions such as Thomas Kuhn's of massive conceptual change within a tradition; and aesthetic modernism's cultivation of novelty through negation, Kögler can develop the methodology of critical dialogue freed from the aporias of ideology-critique or totalizing critiques of reason. By understanding the possibility of critical self-distancing through the concrete experience of cross-cultural dialogue, Kögler can systematically develop Habermas's critique without formal pragmatics.

Taken together, these two books develop ways of maintaining the idea of a detranscendentalized critical theory in accord with Habermas's attempt to ground the theory in postconventional intersubjective structures. Some of the primary areas of inquiry address the internal difficulties in Habermas's account, especially his inability to explicate the genesis of cultural meanings, and the uncertain status of modern art in his theory. The former difficulty

points to the need for inquiry in areas such as the development of substantive conceptions of happiness, justice and the good, with attention to the suppression of gender and class. In recent work by Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser, and Jessica Benjamin, in this sense, the outlines of a fulfilled life emerge in chiaroscuro from the investigation of social and psychological injuries. The latter difficulty is addressed by Jay Bernstein's Adornoesque insight into the way modern art has become the placeholder for otherwise forgotten dimensions of freedom and demands for happiness. Such a theory need not adopt Habermas's formalism or orientation towards rationality, but it could usefully be guided by his ongoing critique of existing practices and institutions from the standpoint of the modern promise of an undamaged life.

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*Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* by Leah S. Marcus. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. xii + 268. 22 illustrations. \$69.95 (£ 40.00) hardcover; \$18.95, paper.

This is a welcome book. For several years Leah Marcus has been arguing—in print, at conferences, and in the classroom—that, following Randall McLeod's lead, we "unedit" early modern texts. Here she has put together revisions of earlier essays and added new material. The result is a convincing argument for leaving Renaissance texts just the way they are, thank you very much. It is as well an indictment, I think, against post-Enlightenment "scientific" thought and the (largely negative) effect it has had on textual analysis and literary studies.

A word of warning. Read the book through. Don't race to the Shakespeare or Marlowe chapters, as this might well lead to the conclusion that Marcus's book is a gathering of Text A *versus* Text B essays. It is not. The book progresses and concludes, and its conclusion turns back upon its beginning and demands a reconsideration and reevaluation of all that she has said earlier.

Marcus opens with an essay on the methods, or pseudo-methods, of post-Renaissance editors; she discusses the "blew ey'd hag," Caliban's mother Sycroax in *The Tempest* (Act I, scene 2, TLN 396), and what editors and annotators over the years have done with and to those blue eyes. Are they dark (and thus evil) circles around the eyes, or might the eyes, flying in the face of Petrarchan norms for the ideal woman, actually be blue? If the latter obtains, then what are we to make, positive, of those blue eyes? Marcus cares less about answering the questions she has posed than about inquiring into the methodology of the answers of earlier editors from the eighteenth century onwards, editors increasingly situated in their own particular historical moments and burdened with their own epistemologies. With the New Historicism rescuing and redeeming Caliban, can Shakespeare actually have meant what he said?

In her second chapter Marcus takes up "Textual Stability and Ideological Difference," using Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* as a case in point.

The text or texts of this play present a number of problems. The "A-Text" of 1604 gives us one play, the "B-Text" of 1616 quite another one. Most editors, looking out there for the "ideal" (fat chance) text that Marlowe actually wrote, looking for the author's final version/revision/reversion, looking for that Platonic model, combine those two texts to give readers a text "closest to the author." This involves conflating the two texts, preferring certain lines, passages, and scenes in one text over those in the other. But, as Marcus argues, "*Dr. Faustus* was malleable and unfixed from the outset, acted in different 'local' versions which can be correlated with different historical moments" (41). Marcus takes her key from differing place names in the two texts. In the 1604 text Faustus hails from Wertenberg, while in the 1616 text he is from Wittenburg. We are so familiar with Wittenburg, "a prominent university town, a haven for lingering elements of late-medieval scholasticism but also the intellectual center of Lutheranism" (44) that we assign Wertenberg, "well known to English Protestants through its associations with the uprisings by radical Zwinglian Protestants during the sixteenth century" (45) to nowhere. Thus the "A-Text" associates Faustus with a "German duchy that was a hotbed of left-wing Protestantism," while the B-text's Wittenburg was "the center of a more conservative Lutheran orthodoxy" (45). Marcus gives us two different plays, two discrete versions, each with its own integrity, its own "authority," and its own theology.

But there is, as Marcus points out, a third text among the many editions of *Dr. Faustus*, a quarto of 1663, whose "text shows a consistent pattern of alteration designed to retool the play for a new theatrical and reading audience" (62). Here the scene with the Pope (B-text only) has been replaced by a visit to the court of Salomaine in Babylon. Different political and theological times call for different plays, for variant texts. There is no one *Dr. Faustus*. There are, at least, three.

Shakespeare suffers more from the need for one pure, "right," "correct" text than Marlowe if only because his dramatic output was greater, occasioning a greater number of different texts of the "same" play and because "we as a culture demand far greater perfection of Shakespeare than we do of Marlowe" (69). Marcus argues in "Purity and Danger in the Modern Edition" that the first (and "bad") quarto of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* "needs to be considered as distinct from the folio rather than a mere corruption of it, and vastly different in terms of its dramatic patterning in ideological function" (70). In brief, Marcus argues convincingly that the quarto, though a mess, appears to be court-hostile, while the folio, more tidy and "correct," appears court-friendly. We have two different plays for, presumably, two different audiences, and yet the "editorial tradition" insists that there must be one text, "the" text.

In "The Editor as Tamer" Marcus discusses two shrewish texts, the anonymous 1594 *Taming of a Shrew* and the Folio *Taming of the Shrew*. These are two very different texts, the first with lines that sound a lot like Shakespeare (and Marlowe), the second (but this may be only because it is in the Folio), entirely Shakespearean. Marcus uses feminist and gender criticism to show how *A Shrew* has been suppressed in favor of *The Shrew* because Katherine's taming in the former is far more questionable than it is in the latter. Ferando is far less clever than Petruchio. The speech (homily) Katherine (not Kate, for

that is what others, males, call her: "They call me Katherine that do talk of me") gives at the end of a *A Shrew* is religious, not, as in *The Shrew*, political. Marcus suggests "that we start thinking of the different versions of *The Taming of the Shrew* intertextually . . . to carry Shakespearean studies out of the filiative search for a single 'authentic' point of origin and into a discursive world in which the authority of the author loses it élan and the work is recognized as instable, existing as an array of concrete, physical documents rather than as that elusive disembodied entity, the work as the author intended it" (124).

In her discussion of *Hamlet*, "Bad Taste and Bad *Hamlet*," Marcus leaves Folio *Hamlet* aside, perhaps at her peril, and concentrates on the "bad" first quarto of 1603 and the good/better *Hamlet* of 1604/1605. Here, focusing on the "To be or not to be" soliloquy, she "recasts the discussion about Q1 *Hamlet* entirely by considering that text and its 'betters' in terms of the differing expectations created by orality and writing as competing forms of communication with the Renaissance playhouse" (137). Throughout Q1 *Hamlet*, from its opening to the "To be or not to be" soliloquy to Hamlet's last words, she finds theological and emotional consistency, quite in tune with Renaissance Christian thought but quite out of tune with twentieth-century doubt and uncertainty. So too in the theater, where "Q2 frequently doubles back upon itself and slows down the action with long meditative speeches, Q1 *Hamlet* has no time for prolonged meditation and very little time for soliloquies" (145). As willing to invent fictions about texts as the next scholar, Marcus offers three narratives about *Hamlet*. The first features Shakespeare, a young playwright in London, trying his hand at a play. The second, using the first, features the same playwright becoming dissatisfied with his first *Hamlet* and revising it. Finally, Shakespeare, having "written the true and perfect Copy later published as Q2, cuts down *Hamlet* for performance" (150). Her chapter tells us things we don't want to hear, not only about the play(s) but also about ourselves and our needs.

"John Milton's Voice," Marcus' final chapter, is about Milton, to be sure, but she sweeps in her old friend Herrick along with Donne and Herbert and nondramatic Shakespeare. She takes on those blue-bound Clarendon editions of seventeenth-century poets and shows how, in their presentations, they deprive readers of a wealth of information, visual and verbal and visual/verbal, available to seventeenth-century readers. Marcus spends a good deal of time on the 1645 volume of Milton's poems, where Milton (and Humphrey Moseley, his publisher) place "On the morning of Christ's Nativity" first, although there are earlier English poems, seeking to parallel the poet's "birth" in print with another, perhaps even more momentous nativity. Oh dear.

Marcus proposes "unediting" the Renaissance "not as a permanent condition or even as a possible condition, but rather as a process by which we recover and reconsider sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed materials in the uncouth, maladept, confusing, maddeningly or delightfully unstable, compelling bodies in which they circulated through their culture and reached readers who were part of the same culture" (227). Though preaching to a convert, Leah Marcus has reminded me of the many ways one can go after texts, the variety of approaches we have at our disposal to evaluate texts,

and the sheer fun of teasing out and substantiating readings in texts once deemed not worth the good paper on which they were printed.

A final word. I like footnotes a lot. There are none here. But the end notes are terrific, even if the nipping forward and back becomes arduous at times. Marcus's documentation is full, discursive, and scrupulous.

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*Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* by Kim F. Hall. Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1995. Pp. xiii + 319. \$42.50, cloth; \$17.95, paper.

Kim Hall begins *Things of Darkness* with the claim that critics and readers have refused to acknowledge that the black/white or dark/light binarism so prevalent in early modern English literature is racialized. Hall aims to complement Winthrop Jordan's survey of the negative meanings of blackness in contrast to whiteness and light which opens his *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro*, and wishes to extend his argument by demonstrating how "gender concerns are crucially embedded in discourses of race" (2). Unlike earlier work which surveyed Africans in Renaissance drama (Eldred Jones, 1965; Elliot H. Tokson, 1982), Hall is interested in what I have elsewhere termed "rhetorical miscegnation" in "linked oppositions, especially of black and white" so widespread in Petrarchan lyric, Renaissance drama and romance (*Shakespeare Reproduced*, ed. Howard and O'Connor, 1987: 144). Hall's is the first book-length study of blackness, colonialism and the construction of race in early modern England and follows in the footsteps of work done in the eighties, mostly on Shakespeare's *Othello* (Karen Newman, 1987; Martin Orkin, 1987; Ania Loomba, 1989). Though Hall considers some materials that have been mined before, including George Best's account of the origins of blackness in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, the proverb "to wash the Ethiop white," John Pory's English translation of Leo Africanus's *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, Purchas, Raleigh, Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* and Shakespeare's *Tempest*, she also considers a variety of less well-known texts such as Abraham Hartwell's *A Reporte of the Kingdome of Congo* (1597), Richard Eden's translation of Lopez de Gomora, *The Decades of the Neue Worlde* (1555), some lesser known poems of blackness that are usefully reprinted in an appendix, several versions of the Cleopatra story, writings by early modern women writers including Wroth, and most interestingly, material culture, particularly jewelry and portraiture.

The book is divided into five chapters, on travel narratives and early histories of Africa, on lyric, particularly the dark/fair dichotomies of the Elizabethan sonnet with emphasis on Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, on drama, particularly Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*, on early modern English women writers and race, and a final chapter, the promise of fascinating work to come, on material culture and representations of blackness in cameos, miniatures and portraits that include a black servant. In her readings of English lyric, drama and material

culture, she argues convincingly that gender is a "primary site for the production of blackness" and that "female bodies serve as the testing ground for the symbolic boundaries of culture and race" (101). A short epilogue seeks to place Hall's project in relation to debates in black feminist criticism about methodology, canonicity and essentialism. Hall argues persuasively that "black feminist criticism is a methodology rather than a performance of blackness" (263), and refuses to make herself "the native informant on race in the Renaissance," but nevertheless tends to exclude all but the work of women of color in tracing her own critical genealogy—Morrison, Spivak, and Loomba. In short, though Hall disavows essentialism, she occasionally enacts it at the level of citation and scholarly apparatus.

This contradiction characterizes not only her methodological discussion, but the larger argument of the book which, while claiming to historicize race in early modern England continually slips into ahistorical claims about blackness and its negative valence. Hall argues for what she terms a strategic anachronism (261), but the contradiction remains. If the racialized dark/light dichotomy Hall analyzes is produced as a result of colonialism and the development of the slave trade, then it cannot mean the same way in Petrarch, for example; and what is to be made of the racialized discourse toward the Irish that precedes colonial expansion? Such problems are never addressed. Equally troubling is Hall's tendency to read the texts she considers in binary fashion. Blackness is always read negatively, the opposite of beauty and the sign of subjugation, with the result that racism with regard to blackness comes to seem ahistorical, always already there. In exposing racism, we must beware of, in Derrida's words ("Racism's Last Words"), passing "segregation off as natural—and as the very law of the origin" by insisting on a historical specificity that while recognizing a shared vocabulary also distinguishes the dark/light dichotomy in Petrarch from that in Sidney, or by allowing that the figure of the black cameo or the submissive black servant boy in portraiture may elude the supremacist aims of its owner/wearer (*Critical Inquiry* 12 [1985]). Toni Morrison ends her powerful account of whiteness and the literary imagination (*Playing in the Dark* [1992]) which Hall acknowledges as a central text for her political and critical project thus:

All of us, readers and writers, are bereft when criticism remains too polite or too fearful to notice a disrupting darkness before its eyes. (91)

Hall admirably refuses to ignore that darkness, to see it as merely metaphorical, but in her concern to demonstrate the oppressive force of the black/white opposition, she may occlude its disrupting power. The reservations expressed here—about essentialism, historical specificity, and a binary reading of the meaning of the dark/light, black/white opposition—are not, of course, peculiar to Hall's project but trouble the burgeoning scholarship on race and colonialism in literary studies more generally. *Things of Darkness* brings to its reader a host of new materials that make it required reading for any teacher of early modern English culture and for scholars interested in the historical construction of racial categories and discourse.

*The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* by John Rogers. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996. Pp. xvi + 257. \$39.95.

John Rogers's book writes a crucial chapter-section in the literary history of a notoriously complex and tricky ideologeme: materialism. The specific—seventeenth-century—materialism in question is called variously religious or animist materialism, hylozoistic pantheism, or—the term favored by Rogers, which I'll now adopt—vitalism: in all variants it involves the belief that soul and body, spirit and matter, are indivisibly one, that spirit is always embodied (thus, in this period, and never or very rarely that it makes no sense to use the distinct terms "soul", "body", "spirit", "matter"). The main aims of the book are three: 1) to demonstrate that vitalist discourses and ideas were prevalent in the middle part of the seventeenth century (c. 1625-75), and that they achieved fullest expression, scope, and currency in what he calls the Vitalist Moment, which coincided precisely with the years of the English revolution (1649-52); 2) to show that the vitalist idea was, in tendency and fact, politically charged—more specifically that it was a liberal or protoliberal idea; and 3) to analyze the processing of the idea in specific cultural and literary texts, tracing in detail the various consequences of its meetings and mutual embodiments with other current ideologies and received genres.

Since these aims are accomplished, one may say that they are also the book's great virtues. Rogers certainly shows that there was a great deal of vitalism being thought and written, to diverse ends, in the middle years of the century, and particularly from 1649 to 1652. Not just translations of the chemist-philosophers Jean Baptiste van Helmont and Francis Glisson and a spate of native alchemical texts, all vitalist, but a new, animist theory of the revolution of the blood and of generation in more mainstream scientific texts by William Harvey; not only the remarkable blossoming of an animist-communist social critique in the Digger spokesperson Winstanley, but the vitalist-based republicanism of the new state's spokesman, Milton (whose conversion to a monistic theory of the soul Rogers plausibly traces to this moment); not just the ontology of Cavendish's royalist science but also that of Marvell's exquisite, ambivalently parliamentary lyrics: no one, I think, has brought the various vitalist discourses together in this way, or demonstrated so convincingly that vitalist notions of matter proliferated especially just at mid-century. No one has identified the monistic substance as matter of revolution.

To show that there was a vitalistic boom in the years of the Commonwealth is not to prove that vitalist ontology was intrinsically revolutionary, of course, or indeed forward-looking. Rogers is far from taking its political affinities and meanings for granted; his case on this score is impressively careful and sophisticated. It is to some extent simply empirical. Most vitalists, Rogers says, sided with Parliament through the civil war, and many were left of Independency; it was not a mistake that after the Restoration, vitalism was marked in the collective memory as a product of Zeal.

But why should it have worked this way, and been coded thus? Rogers does argue for a positive affinity between vitalist ontology and certain positive (protoliberal and radical) outlooks, or in other words between the key

vitalist ideas themselves and certain sociopolitical groupings. Two aspects of the vitalist position account for this affinity. First, the collapsing of soul into body tended to break or damp down the familiar invidious oppositions, basic to traditional self-representation, that went along with this distinction—oppositions between higher and lower, more active and more passive states, and so on. Thinking the individual soul in or as or “together with” the body tended to refigure human moral agency as a process of immanent self-modelling. It put both God and Sin at once at a distance, yet brought them inside. Thus, as opposed to the various Calvinisms and mechanistic theories—and it’s these that Rogers sees mid-century vitalism as intervening against—the notion of the material soul empowered the human creature, making it seem possible and indeed simply natural for people to “rule themselves,” in ways and arenas not excluding political ones.

Second, the equating of spirit with matter tended, it seems, to have had a certain homogenizing effect on the individuals conceived as fashioned from the new spiritous substance, and so coincided with a renewal, or better a threatening literalization of, that perennial, and perennially rhetorical, Christian egalitarianism according to which the poor peasant woman’s soul is worth just as much to Jesus as the king’s. Vitalism *levelled* individual subjects, that is, as well as empowering them. Accordingly—so Rogers assumes and argues—it was attractive to those groups and individuals who felt themselves to represent, and wanted, a freer, more equal species of individuality (which is to say a more free and equal polity and society).

It says something interesting about the revolutionary period, perhaps, and about our own moment as well, that Rogers is at pains *not* to cast vitalism as (part of) an “organic” ideology: that is, as a distinctive and definite set upon the world provided by members of some new or newly aspiring class, corresponding to, and elaborated on the basis of, the novelty of its life conditions and interests. Rogers is making a different, more tentative and limited—in a word a more strictly discursive—sort of argument than Tawney made for English Puritanism as a capitalist ideology, or, to take a somewhat more pertinent example (since he is treating of the origins of liberalism), than C. B. Macpherson made for Hobbesian socio-physics and contractualism as assuming the peculiar conceptuality or categorization-of-activity of a market society and bourgeois life-world. Rogers suggests (p. 22) that the more physiological versions of vitalism might have been spurred or propped up by the (real and discursive) emergence of a free market, but this remains a very minor motive; we are not allowed to forget for long that the originators of vitalism were chemists, and the main “theorists” among them (van Helmont, Glisson) foreign, their works Englished during this moment. The chief, the really moving event behind vitalist ideas’ appeal was *political*, was the revolution itself, though political happenings could have such a strong and immediate ontological effect owing to a general discursive condition which itself tends to take on the status of an underlying cause in Rogers’s argument. Vitalist philosophy came to seem plausible and urgently exciting because the political discourses justifying revolution needed bolstering from other discursive spheres. But even had there been a strong republican tradition in Britain (Rogers more or less assumes, I believe, that there was not), the continuing habit and prestige of analogy in this premodern period would

have made such bolstering, consisting of the discovery of "republican-liberal" models of (relatively autonomous) agency and (relatively egalitarian) organization in other fields, imperative. Vitalism, we might say then, was an organic ideology in the sense of limning in the necessary assumptions, not of a class, but of a historical moment, that in which the revolution happens and, the country finding itself (becoming) republican, attempts to resituate itself appropriately within the analogical matrix so that all coherence not be gone. Thus it is that Rogers can account, in what for me is one of the triumphs of his argument, for the tenacious and manifestly anxious subscription, against their best aristocratic instincts, of the royalist scientists Harvey and Cavendish to vitalist ontologies.

Yet this pragmatic, "discursivist" explanation, it seems to me, leads also to some less satisfactory analyses and emphases. I am thinking especially of the last chapter, in which Rogers asks why, not vitalist, but Hobbesian mechanistic materialism came to serve as the ontological basis for British liberalism. He frames the question in such a way as to suggest a conventionalist version of Macpherson's argument. Whether or no Hobbes's basic tenets reflected deep-bourgeois assumptions "from the first," it came over time to seem that way, to be in fact the case, as the tradition of political liberalism established and consolidated itself. Things might have been otherwise, it's implied; vitalism might have won out and come to underpin liberal political principles, thereby becoming organic itself and yielding a kinder, better liberalism. This alternate scenario didn't—couldn't—materialize, Rogers suggests, because vitalism had a fatal flaw which rendered it incapable of being coherently figured, an internal failing plainly witnessed by its literary expressions even in its moment. This flaw consisted in its being really egalitarian in its implications—impossibly egalitarian, or at least too much and too vaguely so, Rogers implies.

My reservations concerning this argument don't have so much to do with the readings which Rogers offers to sustain, though there does appear what may be a telltale drift in the direction of allegorical interpretation (wherein, for example, in what seems to me the one really implausible reading in the whole book, the faun of Marvell's "Nymph Complaining" becomes a figure for vitalism, and the poem an elegy for the vitalist moment itself). My misgivings have rather to do with the type and degree of agency attributed to ideas here, which seems somewhat inconsistent when it is not somewhat exorbitant. Rogers's rhetoric suggests that there was something somehow lacking in the various vitalist discourses themselves, some elusive promise of coherence that they failed to realize; yet he straightforwardly acknowledges, at the end of this chapter, that they were simply too radical to articulate the hegemonic values of the men of property who to some extent made, to some extent captured, the revolution. If vitalism was too egalitarian to serve as a coherent subtending liberal ideology in its moment, and wasn't brought back later to serve this function, perhaps that was because it wasn't compatible with liberalism—wasn't a protoliberal ideology at all, or at least (and Rogers sometimes suggests as much) not in the main. Why should this be seen as a tragedy?

Whatever the ultimate explanatory value of the book's discursivism, it does not prevent a meticulous and subtle attention to matters of literary

form. Rogers avoids the problems generally associated with the literary history of ideas and discourses, as it seems to me, by focussing on the relation between (religious or natural-philosophical) discourse and literary figuration or form, and assuming the symptomatic or overdetermined character of this relation. Though Rogers's chapters are remarkably coherent with one another in approach and tenor, they are too dense and varied to permit more than the barest of summaries here. They move chronologically, so that one comes away with some sense, appropriately tricky, of vitalist ontology's historical winning through and losing out. This sense will not come through in the following summary; nor that the specific readings and arguments are unfailingly provocative; nor that they are usually convincing. In chapter one, Rogers considers the implications of the incursion of a vitalistic explanation for the circulation of the blood into Harvey's reissue of his famous theory in 1649 (in a text titled *Of the Circulation of the Blood*; the theory had first been published, in *Of the Motion of the Heart*, in 1628). Chapters two and three provide an unexpected and original view of Marvell as a lyricist of vitalism, arrived at by way of a comparison with Winstanley. Four and five show how Milton's monistic materialism informs and distorts the narrative representation of Creation and Fall, respectively, in *Paradise Lost*. Chapter Six returns to natural philosophy, and argues that Margaret Cavendish, in her scientific writings, turns the doctrine of spiritualized matter into an antipatriarchal principle, using it as the chief support for a feminist politics.

As an authoritative treatment of the cultural significance of religious materialism in the middle part of the seventeenth century, this intelligent and useful study assumes a place alongside two very different books, Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972) and Stephen Fallon's *Milton among the Philosophers* (1991). It deserves to be widely read.

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*Gray Agonistes: Thomas Gray and Masculine Friendship* by Robert F. Gleckner. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Pp. x + 231. \$45.00.

With *Gray Agonistes: Thomas Gray and Masculine Friendship*, Robert F. Gleckner takes up anew the issues of poetic influence and agon that have occupied the better part of his career. His last monograph, *Blake and Spenser* (1985), his "Joyce's Blake: Paths of Influence" (*William Blake and the Moderns*, 1982), his earlier article in the pages of this journal, "Blake, Gray, and the Illustrations" (1977), and his still justly respected *The Piper and the Bard: A Study of William Blake* (1957), indicate the abiding strength of Gleckner's interest in what he has long called "significant allusion." In this his most recent book Gleckner defines the "notion" as allusion "reasonably verifiable by the total thrust of the poem into which it has been imported as evoking its original context, not merely its dictional felicitousness or even its linguistic appropriateness to that poem's general tenor or subject" (154). In *Blake and Spenser*, Gleckner's introductory discussion of Blake's illustrations to Gray's

*Poems* presented Blake as the model artist whose agonistic relation to Spenser provided that kind of fertile "mélange" of "significant allusions" to which Gleckner has persistently addressed his energy and learning. Gray, at the time, was of less interest: "From the pattern of his allusions to Spenser as well as to other poets, contemporary and early, it is clear that Gray's purpose in such allusions . . . was to incorporate in his own poetry *le mot juste*, what was ne'er so well expressed . . ." (*Blake and Spenser* 13). Now, however, Gray's "brilliant poetic and allusional strategies" (8) and "allusive depths" (185) reveal to Gleckner's keen eye a subtextual double narrative of agon and anxiety in Gray's "relationships" with Milton and Richard West. *Gray Agonistes* thus represents both a logical step in Gleckner's career and the welcome fruition of that exciting strain of historicist Gray criticism advanced by Raymond Bentman, George Haggerty, Jean Hagstrum, Wallace Jackson, Suvir Kaul, and, to a certain extent, G. S. Rousseau.

This is a book with a story to tell, and Gleckner is candid about the nature of his endeavor: "I am not unwilling that what follows be received as something *like* a psychobiography" (16). His italics are apt, since *Gray Agonistes* is in fact a satisfying piece of criticism that combines impressive scholarship with tightly focused—sometimes overly so—close readings. But its aim is less to leave readers with new interpretations of individual poems than to offer a new understanding of the poet and his career: "my intention [is] to illuminate not so much Gray's life as Gray's life *in* his poetry, not so much Gray as man but Gray as poet seeing himself as a man, not so much Gray's psyche as his imaginative reflections and representations of that psyche in the poetry, of which it is fundamentally constitutive" (16). Despite these early distinctions, *Gray Agonistes* often does attempt to see into the emotional life of "Gray as man," and the title, taken from Hagstrum's "Gray's Sensibility"—"The true man was Gray Agonistes"—suggests the critical character of the project. Gleckner consequently "eschew[s] an elaborate skein of theoretical underpinnings from Freud or Foucault or Lacan or Irigaray or Kristeva—or from other related, oft-quoted authorities" (16), and the result is a sometimes frustrating, sometimes refreshing, biographical rhetoric that produces a rich analysis of Gray's career in light of what Gleckner's supple intellect has come to understand of Gray's agonistic poetic and epistolary writings, his conflicted narratives of personal and poetic hopes and fears.

The story that emerges from Gray's poems and letters is thus "a double narrative of interlocking 'personal histories': (1) his heroic engagement with the reigning power of Milton's achievement and with his precedential model for a literary career, both fueling Gray's drive toward the status of Poet in his own right, not of mere Miltonic imitator; and (2) his equally heroic struggle to come to terms with his own sexuality, with his love for West, with his all-absorbing grief at West's early death, and finally with his late-life love of, and abandonment by, Bonstetten" (7). Following the introduction, the book accordingly sets out "The Miltonic Background," as Chapter 2 is called, followed by two chapters on Gray's relationship with West, their correspondence, and the meaning of the Quadruple Alliance during and after the edenic Eton days: "Gray, West, and Epistolary Encoding" and "Gray, West, Walpole, and the Letters." Having set up this dual structure, Gleckner then in four consecutive chapters ("The Poems" I, II, III, and IV) takes the reader

through Gray's career as it is constituted by the ways in which Gray's two personal narratives "interlock, intersect, interanimate with, even at times serve as surrogates (or metonymies) for, each other" (8).

Gleckner's challenge in reading Gray's career through these two narratives is to bring them together convincingly, and in this he succeeds admirably. I will offer the barest of sketches to illustrate the kind of synthesis he is able to craft through the explication of Gray's allusions. According to Gleckner, Gray was almost unique in the mid-eighteenth century for his recognition of the "satanic" nature of Milton's intention in *Paradise Lost* "with no middle flight . . . to soar / Above th'Aonian mount" in pursuit of "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." "Up led by thee," Milton invokes his heavenly muse Urania at the beginning of Book 7, "Into the heav'n of heav'ns I have presumed . . ." (12-13). At the end of *The Progress of Poesy*, a poem in which Gleckner demonstrates the parallels between Gray's portrait of Milton and Milton's portrait of God in Book 3, Dryden's "less presumptuous" verse, while celebrated, is all but dismissed as a vehicle worthy to succeed Milton's achievement. Gray himself, the "daring spirit" of the final stanza, will ostensibly follow Milton's ambitious ascent: "Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way / Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate" (121-22). But the poem "waffles uncertainly" (36) between Miltonic daring and the lesser presumption of Dryden, settling finally if temporarily on Gray's vague and middling "distant way," a way that would collapse in Gray's final encounter with Milton's ghost at the end of *The Bard*. The Miltonic sublime for Gray, then, is more than a matter of a style to be imitated; it is a presumptuous transgression for which, in *The Progress of Poesy*, Milton is anxiously rejected and recompensed with blindness: "He saw; but blasted with excess of light, / Closed his eyes in endless night" (101-2), and it is this last phrase Gray uses to describe Milton, a phrase in fact written by West, that will serve to illustrate Gleckner's method.

If Gray's ambition to follow Milton is both dangerous and transgressive—"as God and heaven were to Milton, so Milton and poetic immortality were to Gray" (28)—equally so is the subtextual subject of Gray's attempts to sing with Milton's voice, his homosexual love for West and his extended mourning over West's death. In West's *Ad Amicos*, which West sent to Gray in a letter dated July 4, 1737—"unquestionably a turning point in Gray's life" (68)—West prophesies his own approaching end. Concluding, West solaces himself with the elegiac reflection that his parting soul could yet cast one "longing ling'ring look behind" to "some fond breast," Gray's: "Yet some there are (ere spent my vital days) / Within whose breasts my tomb I wish to raise" (*Correspondence of Thomas Gray* 64). The parenthetical remark, however, was not West's but Gray's; West's original phrase, "ere sunk in endless night," Gray replaced with "ere spent my vital days" (altering the next line as well) long after he transcribed the original poem into his commonplace book, saving West's words for Milton's blindness in *The Progress of Poesy* and for his own ending in *The Bard* years later: "Deep in the roaring tide he sunk [altered later to "plung'd"] to endless night." According to Gleckner's narrative, this allusive "finishing" (the title of Gleckner's Conclusion) to *The Bard* was also the figurative finishing to Gray's Miltonic career, an admission of failure that led to no pastures new but rather to his "abortive foray into

Welsh and Norse antiquarianism" (158). As Milton's transgression blasted his sight, closing his eyes "in endless night," Gray's curtailed relationship with West sunk Gray into an endless night of mourning, announced in *The Bard* by the poet's final fatal plunge. Gray's poems, then, only refigure West's prophetic wish and Milton's satanic trespass, making of Gray the tomb in which lie both his transgressive but failed ambitions, to be a Miltonic-inspired poet (Gray settles for a series of "middle flights") and to love West (Gray can only "fruitless mourn to him, that cannot hear"). Gleckner's Gray, then, can only be excavated by attending to the subtextual narratives Gray simultaneously revealed and obscured through careful encoding and demandingly significant allusions.

At times, the Gray of the Miltonic sublime as the true Gray—the most meaningful and interesting—is hard to accept, and when we are told that what is remarkable about the *Favourite Cat* ode is "Gray's extraordinary success in deflecting our attention from his personal poetic agon" (157), his success seems extraordinary indeed. Gleckner's analysis of the *Elegy* (126-33), in particular, is so "sharply focused" (132) as to exclude any mention of the "rude forefathers of the hamlet" who are in fact "each in his narrow cell for ever laid." Gleckner replaces them with West, too firmly accommodating the poem to his thesis: Gray's line 21, "For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn," becomes Gray *Agonistes*' "For [him] no more the blazing hearth shall burn" (129).

But Gleckner's narrative of Gray's career remains for the most part persuasive. Because of its intricacy and erudition, *Gray Agonistes* will be of interest primarily to Gray scholars and Miltonists, but its candid and rigorous examination of Gray's sexual anxieties and milieu will prove engaging to all students of the eighteenth century, of the history of sexuality, and of the poetics of (auto)biographical writing.

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*Fantastic Modernity: Dialectical Readings in Romanticism and Theory* by Orrin N. C. Wang. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Pp. x + 232. \$38.50.

Romanticist criticism has been in a reflexive mode lately: some of its strongest and most prominent scholars have been devoting a good deal of their energies to writing metacritical essays about the state of the field. How to explain Romantic studies' recent preoccupation with itself? And how might we in turn reflect on this moment, sorting out the unproductively self-conscious critical stutter from forms of metacommentary that genuinely help us understand where we are? In *Fantastic Modernity*, Orrin Wang admirably addresses these and other questions. He argues that twentieth-century Romantic studies—and especially those of the last twenty years—have always constituted even if only implicitly a highly self-reflexive discourse; one of the central goals of his book is to explore why and how the field of Romanticism especially bears this burden. Thus this is a book which should be ex-

tremely interesting not only to all scholars of the Romantic period, but also to all persons interested in the history and politics of recent literary theory and criticism.

Wang situates Romanticist criticism's reflexivity within its dialogue with postmodernism, investigating the ways in which contemporary critics reconfigure Romantic texts "as the primal scene for their own postmodern theory" (6). (It should be pointed out that Wang sometimes uses "postmodernism" somewhat restrictively to indicate the world of poststructuralist literary theory, and sometimes to indicate a more broadly theorized social or cultural postmodern "condition".) He proposes that the relationship between Romanticism and postmodernism may become intelligible if we focus on both discourses' orientation towards the notion of modernity, a notion which, he argues, has for both a central and ineluctably fantastic quality. The concept of modernity holds out the possibilities of both historical identity and historical difference, possibilities that are always shifting and heterogenous. So, for example, while we have traditionally understood Romanticism as a movement completely bound up with a sense of its own newness and of its role in forging radical cultural change, we have also come to understand it as deeply skeptical of such claims. Postmodernism's relation to the modern is of course always vexed, as it projects modernity as that from which it radically breaks, a modernity it defines variously and differentially in relation to Enlightenment or Romanticism. In some versions, moreover, the postmodern condition represents an epistemological and ontological rupture with the very kind of historical thinking that grounds the notion of the modern. By demonstrating modernity's unstable, fantastic, ever-vanishing nature within and between Romanticism and postmodernism, Wang pinpoints the modern as that which is both disruptive to and yet constitutive of historical understanding.

What emerges from *Fantastic Modernity* is not a totalizing view of either postmodernism or Romanticism, but rather the particularities of a number of specific and often contradictory engagements, worked out through a series of chapters that pair Romantic writers with contemporary thinkers. Wang reads de Man with Shelley, Bloom with Emerson, feminist Romanticists with Wollstonecraft, McGann with Heine, Jameson with Keats. Methodologically, he is self-aware about what it means to focus on such "representative" figures: he seeks to track the dialectic through which contemporary critic and romantic writer constitute and "mutually transform each other" (9).

The book is also methodologically attuned to the ways in which the lessons of historicism and the lessons of deconstructive reading might address each other. The chapter on the methodological and political contours of Romanticist New Historicism, for example, tracks through McGann's *Romantic Ideology* "the sublimity of a historical error that underwrites historical knowledge" (105). Wang sees historical knowledge, that is, as approachable only through error: "the possibility of historical difference operates as an *aporia* of historical thought, a condition that testifies to the radical indeterminacy of historical difference as a stable form of human truth" (3); but error is also the condition of possibility of historical thinking at all. In the case of *The Romantic Ideology*, Wang focuses on the consequences of McGann's misidentification of his historical project with that of Heinrich Heine, a misidentification that

exposes McGann's ambivalent relationship to Marxism, the conflicts between his various "materialisms," and the recalcitrance of what Wang sees as McGann's "covert" or "uninterrogated" commitment to an "emancipatory Romanticism" (81). By exploring Romanticist New Historicism's often unacknowledged allegiances to particular versions of the past and present, its allegiance to an Enlightenment "modernity" and an attendant "progressive futurity" (104), Wang is able to identify some of its theoretical weaknesses and symptomatic moves.

Wang's dialectic between historical and rhetorical reading is in evidence as well in his ambitious chapter on de Man. Here, he reads "Shelley Disfigured" with "The Triumph of Life," using Shelley's poem to tackle the political context of de Man's extraordinary essay—and by extension the whole controversy about the relationship of de Man's writing to the grim "modernity" of fascism. Wang's approach to this topic (which is contextualized by an illuminating discussion, in the preceding chapter, of A. O. Lovejoy and Leo Spitzer's 1940's debate about the relations among Romanticism, fascism, and cultural transmission: these are not new issues to Romantic studies) is inflected by his book's persistent interest in the relationship between theory and practice, or the correspondence between words and deeds, thought and action. He argues that the historical significance of de Man's take on these matters in "Shelley Disfigured" depends on restoring to Shelley's poem a sense of the politics that lie behind "The Triumph of Life's—and by extension de Man's—radical skepticism. Focusing on the presence of both Rousseau and (ingeniously but less convincingly) Edmund Burke in the poem, he reads "Triumph" as a profoundly post-Enlightenment and post-Napoleonic document, ambivalent about the possibility of revolutionary rupture, and critical precisely of revolutionary gestures that forget their own rhetoricity, that assume an easy transition from words to deeds. This, according to Wang, is the lesson "Triumph" might teach us about how to think about the relationship between de Man's words and his earlier deeds: that words and deeds "coexist simultaneously in an actively intolerable disjunction" (66). And this is the political tradition—what Wang calls "the crisis of the Jacobin imaginary" (65)—to which de Man belongs. Some readers may feel that Wang's reading (which I've necessarily simplified) runs the risk of effectively disabling his ability to say anything substantive about de Man's politics; others will applaud his demonstration of how excruciatingly difficult it is to say anything on this topic at all.

Wang's chapter on feminism and Romanticism differs from the rest in that it doesn't—symptomatically—focus on a single contemporary critic. But in its attention to twentieth-century feminism's relationship to Enlightenment, modernity, and praxis, and to Romanticist feminists' concern with the politics of transmission, the chapter forges important continuities between feminist scholarship and the concerns of the book as a whole. Wang continues to work out the mutually constituting "excesses" (9) between contemporary and Romantic writers, in this case focusing on the missed conjunctions between Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and the concerns of feminist Romanticists. Arguing that contemporary readers may have erred in seeing Wollstonecraft as caught up in binary thinking that hypostasizes male and female, and in particular masculinity with reason and femininity with

passion, Wang details the profoundly anti-essentialist nature of her thought. While his close readings of Wollstonecraft are excellent, he does not do justice to the range of recent approaches to Wollstonecraft in both literary studies and political theory. Moreover, his treatment of the relationship of passion and reason in her work will seem less consequential if contextualized by an understanding of the deeply entrenched place of passion within Enlightenment political thought. Still, Wang mobilizes his reading of Wollstonecraft to suggest the crucial interventions a feminist Romanticism can—in addition to, say, recovering the work of women writers—make: its crucial role in self-reflexively deracializing the meanings of both "Romanticism" and "gender," its potential to mobilize the aporias of its own acts of recovery for a retheorization of both terms.

Some readers will value *Fantastic Modernity* for its engagements with individual texts, both literary and critical; for others its importance will lie in its sustained attention to the elusive, fantastic nature of historical change—and hence the shifting understandings of the relation between theory and practice—within Romanticism. It is Wang's attention to these persistent issues that convinces us why and how Romanticist criticism continues to be on the forefront of contemporary thought.

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Adela Pinch

*Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* by Susan Wolfson. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997. Pp. xi + 344. \$39.50.

What kinds of "charges" are "formal"? We might think immediately of a charge to a jury in its deliberations of innocence and guilt, or a formal *charge* of criminal wrongdoing offered to a "charged" suspect. Indeed, we might well wonder about the laying of charges and the imputation of guilt when discovering that this tome is about form and style in Romantic poetry, and poetry of the high canon, at that. What could be guiltier? Susan Wolfson has entered a deeply contentious and vexed field in this book, for in it she seeks to revisit the old conundrums of poetic form in British poetry and the strange history of critical and theoretical responses to the formalist nature of Romantic poetry. This is already a charged ground, explosive in its rhetoric and wide-ranging in its apportioning of blame. All the same, in defiance of the pervasiveness (as she reads it) of the charge that formalist poetry is complicit with the worst forms of ideological co-optation and specious social indoctrination, Wolfson claims to get a charge out of the formal. This is a quiet and delightful surprise, and indeed we ought to be even more surprised at just how novel it sometimes seems to be: "I want to make a case for the pleasures, intellectual and aesthetic, of attending to the complex charges of form in poetic writing" (2). Explain to anyone but another professional literary theorist that you need to "make a case" for the pleasures of form in poetry and you will be charged with . . . insanity. And so Wolfson's careful historicizing of our current state of affairs in this respect is important and welcome.

Susan Wolfson situates herself as a critic who seems tired already of the old arguments about formalist procedure as bad, bad, bad, and who thus wants to get on with the business of reminding herself and her readers just why we even bothered getting so excited about the practice of reading in the first place. She sets to work actually reading canonical Romantic poems, and she does a good job of this. Further, in offering clear-sighted engagements with poetic texts, she seeks to "offer this method as theory in action" (1). I would question the latter formulation, because there is in fact nothing elaborately theorized about the particular ways in which she here attends to the sounds and textures of form. Her theoretical investments instead rely primarily on a commitment to stylistic and thematic deciphering which, she hopes, does not neglect the historicity of the text. In this, her close reading, and her defense of it, do constitute an urgent polemic, even a defiant one. In contesting, for example, Terry Eagleton's complaints about lyric as "ideologically resolvable form," she leaves no doubt about the ground she is staking out: "Too many readers today accept Eagleton's marginalizing, simplifying, or simply dismissive attention to poetic form as a labour of 'reductive operation,' an exercise 'preoccupied simply with analyzing linguistic devices.' I want to refute the myopia implied by 'reductive' and 'preoccupied' and the triviality implied by 'simply,' by demonstrating how, in the critical perspectives that have evolved after New Criticism, attention to form can articulate issues often felt to be inimical: not only the factitiousness of organic coherence, closed designs, and cognitive totality, but also the construction of forms in relation to subjectivity, cultural ideology, and social circumstance" (19). That makes for a big project indeed.

Wolfson's sense of form is perhaps overly sensitive to the vulnerability faced by all critics seeking to refresh formalist analysis: she is a little on the defensive about the historicist valence of the poems she interrogates, and so many of her arguments proceed, perhaps inadvertently, as indirect defences of the political implications of the text after all. Charged as formal, they are largely defended as forms with extra (historical) charge. Still, this is not always her strategy, and so a fully consistent theoretical stance is not perfectly discernable here. I would add, however, that variances in approach of this sort are not necessarily problematic, because one of the primary claims of this book is precisely that literature ought not to be reduced to oversimplified preconceptions of context and contingency. Some poems may well be merely nasty pieces of ideological work; others subvert their received social premises; still others intentionally signal, rather than efface, their suppressed historical referents. For Wolfson, then, the work of reading is the work of discerning nuance and difference from text to text.

The first chapter, "Formal Intelligence: Formalism, Romanticism, and Formalist Criticism" provides an interesting overview of the fortunes of formalist writing in academic criticism for most of this century. Wolfson skillfully traces the New Criticism's dialectical engagements with the (old) historicism that preceded it, hence rescuing Brooks, Warren, and Company from the charge of having blithely ignored all extratextual realities. Further, she shows that, for example, "it is important to recognize that Brooks did not say that studying poetry refused history and culture, only that the former required different kinds and sequences of attention" (8). Likewise, she corrects

the oversimplified view that "organic form" is most of the story of Romantic formalism, and she cautions against the sentimentalized reduction of the poets to silly naifs writing in spontaneous effusions: "Romantic texts are more various than monolithic, and their poetic practices are alert to form as a construction" (23).

Thus it is that she studies Blake's *Poetical Sketches* in terms of a self-referentiality that is also insistently a call to praxis, for his formal practices "are actions that call readers to a critical awareness of the work of form, not only in poetic but also in cognitive, social, and historical processes" (32). Coleridge, the very figure who is most associated with the institutionalization of all the sensitive aspects of form (symbol, organicism, to name only two), is studied from the perspective of his use of simile. The simile is a figure that advertises its nonidentity with the signified, and so relentlessly asserts its own self-awareness *qua* (failed) equation. Wolfson's careful attention to Coleridge's processes in this regard enables her to produce an historically inflected rescue: "Coleridge's persistent turns and returns to simile are the signature of an imagination always given to reading its world, in various degrees, in formations of *like* and *as*. And the remarkable boldness of this signature is its projection of a formalist criticism worked through the instabilities of organic form and its ideological commitments" (99).

These are important readings, but here we might pause to ask all the same: does Coleridge's remarkable manipulation of simile in fact signify a *working through* of ideology? Here again there is the sign, perhaps, of an over-defensiveness, where form is read as a self-conscious way of virtually rejecting itself. This is in no way to dispute her careful readings of the political and social conditions of poetic economies; it is, however, to open up further the question about the relation of poetry to praxis. Wolfson herself is well aware of this potential for defensiveness; in the afterword she does end by "urging attention to form not only defensively, in terms of its potential agency within and against the cultural regimes that Bourdieu describes, but also affirmatively" (232). And indeed, the discussion of Wordsworth's revisions in *The Prelude* to the "drowned man of Esthwaite" scene certainly does escape any critical oversensitivity to the political meaning of formalist work. This is a particularly meticulous chapter, full of careful calibrations of the text's manuscript history, though one that seems to privilege the psychological subject over the forms of its articulations.

The chapter on Byron studies his use of the heroic couplet in *The Corsair*, in which the poet's "social existence" is performed in ways that answer directly to Jerome McGann's oft-cited call for readings that turn aesthetic experience into self-consciously critical understanding (135). Keats is brought forward, especially in his post-Great Odes phase (in the poems to Fanny Brawne), as "moving through and beyond this kind of formalism [that of *Endymion*] into an investigation of poetic forms as factitious, temporary, and historically situated, thoroughly implicated with systems of experience and processes of language that they cannot transcend" (192). The final chapter studies P. B. Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy* alongside the final lyrics addressed to Jane and Edward Williams. Here we have what is taken to be the paradigm for a formalist poetry that is intimately responsive to its social environment and to the pressures of a deeply felt context, one whose echoes

can be discerned even in the intensely private world of the lyric gift to a friend. It is worth spending some real time with this chapter; indeed, in the introduction to the book, Wolfson looks forward to showing that "Shelley's socially contextualized poetic forms write an agenda for a contextualized formalist criticism" (29).

Whether or not one ultimately agrees that the happiest form is one amenable to contextualist critique, this is a worthwhile agenda, and Wolfson has therefore written an important book. Its strangest omission, however, is the absence of any full recognition of the pioneering work performed by Stuart Curran in his magisterial book, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (1986). There Curran sets his attention to somewhat different matters, but much of what Wolfson argues will still need to be measured, at least partly, against Curran's formidable example. Curran, unlike Wolfson, is interested in the full historical and ideological provenance of Romantic forms; a reading of the contextualized character of Romantic poetry would benefit immensely from a dialogue with Curran's work.

This is not to suggest that Wolfson has not written an original and engaging study. Her call for a refreshed look at nuance and detail, and her example of a loving engagement with the texts we spend our lives with, will be with us, I hope, for a long time.

University of Toronto

Karen A. Weisman

*Urban Verbs: Art and Discourse of American Cities* by Kevin R. McNamara. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. Pp. v + 310. \$39.50.

In a time when concern over historical context seems to control the theory that drives interdisciplinary methods, it is refreshing to see a work that attempts to deal with the importance of space as well as that of time. McNamara's work investigates the city—in most cases New York—not as a setting, but as a kind of protagonist. The city is not reduced to being simply a place where things happen, but the city, in its own right, "happens." The city effects change, creates tension, embodies contradiction. Through an investigation of literary and visual texts, the author reveals and explores the "conflicts that careful discursive arguments conceal" (5). By highlighting the complexity and confusion inherent in urban cultural space, we may begin to explore how cities make material certain discourses of agency. Cities are not just places in which humans interact; they are spaces which, having been constructed within a context of particular discourses, come to embody, maintain, and challenge these discourses in ways that affect cultural experience.

The book's six chapters are paired in such a way that the first chapter of each couple provides an example of a text in which conflict has been concealed. The second chapter of each paired set illustrates "an understanding of the uses of the apparent disorder [in urban space] and a recognition of the often unconscious negotiation of difference" (6). Rather than being set up as three binary oppositions, then, each case explores a particular aspect of the materiality of the city. The first pairing provides two perspectives on New

York at the turn of the century. Henry James's *The American Scene* is cited for being "traversed by nostalgia," unable to grant any positive slant to the changes being brought about by the polyphonic effects of the influx of immigrants and the shift in power structure from old money to new money. Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, however, recognizes and attempts to deal with the complexities of a polyphonic urbanism by using the discourses of social science to illustrate the tension "between inevitability and intervention" (76). McNamara nods to the topic of gender in the second pairing through an investigation of how language genders not only people but place and space. In his architectural renderings in *The Metropolis of Tomorrow*, Hugh Ferriss's drawings illustrate the notion of the "Ferrissian womb," the mental space of the architect where pure ideas are conceived and from which they are born. In contrast, the means by which William Carlos Williams represents the concept of marriage in his urban epic, *Paterson*, "gives the poem a new geography," one that displaces marriage with dissonance (168). The final pairing presents the human population as integral to the life of the city. The noir film *The Naked City* (directed by Jules Dassin) adequately presents the viewer with the violence and chaos of the city's underside, but in being presented as *only one* of "eight million stories," the viewer can relax and enjoy the closure provided by the singling out of this story as an anomaly. On the other hand, the postmodern buildings of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown provide us with examples of how to understand that the eight million possible stories are always under "(re)construction" (210) and that closure never really exists in urban space.

Perhaps more interesting than each particular textual investigation is how the form of the book reinforces the argument that agency lies within conflict, within complexity. This idea opposes the strand of Marxist thought which conceives of power as being seated squarely within the superstructure. For the base to effect any change whatsoever, an all-out revolution is required. The problem with this logic is that it denies power to any group that has not claimed agency in the same manner as the hegemony. In such a view of hegemony, power can be neither indecision, conflict, nor complexity; it is decision, resolution, and simplicity. McNamara illustrates that, on the contrary, power can often reside within complexity; the works of Dreiser, Williams, Venturi, and Scott Brown highlight this point. It is in works that allow the city an agency by means of negotiation between and among competing discourses, rather than in those that illustrate a Jamesian nostalgia for simplicity and truth, that we may begin to envision the power of conflict and complexity.

Two concepts invite this text into a larger academic conversation: those of space and of the subaltern. If Foucault has written that "it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us," an investigation into the "city as protagonist" is an excellent way to situate power within the city and to uncover meanings hidden by specific discourses, those of "time" and "history" to name only two. Unfortunately, neither the texts that are meant to illustrate closure, nor those chosen to provide examples of conflict, are approached any differently in the way they are read. Formalist textual analysis, which pays attention to character development, language, form, shading, and plot, and soon, overshadows the subject of the book: the city. Despite

the author's claims that this work presents the city as protagonist, the city as agent is often lost in arguments about Carrie's motivation or Williams's use of language.

This is not to say that there is no evidence here of the city as an agent of power. When the book works with the notions of space, it joins with the recent work of scholars such as Edward Soja and Derek Gregory. Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* and Gregory's *Geographical Imaginations* emphasize the importance and power of actual, physical space as the site for material rhetoric. Following their work, McNamara's chapter "Building Culture" examines the shift in architectural styles in terms of changes that came about as the United States experienced an increase in the numbers of wealthy citizens. This new money did not, however, wish to emulate the behavior of old money and remain behind closed doors in private homes, sequestered and hidden; as a result, the country club and luxury hotel found their way into urban culture. McNamara regards these spaces as physical manifestations of beliefs and desires, permitting the reader to see how the materiality of the building, not simply its depiction in literature (or even in renderings), takes part in the discourse of the city.

Subaltern power, as discussed by Gayatri Spivak, may be thought of as the power and agency claimed by the oppressed. Instead of being at the mercy of hegemonic power, the oppressed are viewed as having agency that stems from their particular position and intimate knowledge of their place in society. While Spivak's work remains specific to colonial India, her ideas apply to the context of other minority groups or peoples that are generally considered lacking in political and social power. *Urban Verbs* insightfully presents complexity and conflict as an indication of the presence of power, but rarely is the power located in physical buildings or in relation to oppressed or dominated groups. This lack has much to do with the subject matter of the book, which is not a work on race, class, or gender, as noted in McNamara's preference for texts about New York City rather than texts that are of New York City. He investigates works that embody hegemonic power (*The American Scene*, hotels, country clubs, and skyscrapers), but does not give voice to works that embody the subaltern power to which he alludes (tenements, graffiti, immigration records or journals, and so on). Even so, his work provides a set of blueprints for a potentially exceptional theoretical idea: that the conflict and complexity noted in the relationship between hegemonic spaces and oppressed peoples may indeed reveal a site of subaltern power.

In theorizing the materiality of space, rather than its representation, we indeed open ourselves to being able to observe people, places, and things that are often rendered invisible, silent, and unknowable. However, many questions remain. To whom does the city speak? Are we all capable of understanding her language? It seems that though we are able to explore the complexities of material rhetoric, we do not yet have a language to describe nonlinguistic material discourse. We may also encounter an ethical dilemma in our desire to uncover the sites of subaltern power: in the act of examining, and thereby exposing, subaltern power, will we not be culpable of rendering such power impotent? Perhaps, if the subject is the subaltern of the present, we may. In turning our attention to those subjects as historical, however, such investigation provides not only an expanded understanding of certain

historical moments, but also the means by which we may begin to discover how materiality and the subaltern speak. *Urban Verbs* deals with historical texts. It is in a contextualized history that the subject of space may indeed gain ground as a relevant site for scholarly investigation.

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Amy K. M. Hawkins

*Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism and the First World War* by Allyson Booth. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. x + 186. \$35.00.

Nearly all literary criticism of the First World War contends, either directly or indirectly, with Paul Fussell's classic account in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975). Indeed, the status of Fussell's thesis in studies of the war can hardly be overstated: although in rare cases critics do dispute Fussell's argument that "there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War," modernist scholars on the whole have accepted as a premise the Fussellian notion of a constitutive relation between the deep, conceptual trauma wrought by the war and the fragmentary, disorienting nature of high modernism. (Two recent critics, however, have provocatively challenged important aspects of Fussell's thesis. Adrian Caesar argues that the conventional reading of Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves as antiwar poets fails to account for the valorization of violence and suffering in their poetry; he thus places these canonical figures alongside Rupert Brooke (rather than in opposition to the patriotic poet) as proponents of a troubling and angry masculinity; *Taking It Like a Man: Suffering, Sexuality, and the War Poets* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). Joanna Bourke contests Fussell's claim that a misogynistic and alienated sensibility reigned among soldiers and veterans. For Bourke, the vast majority of fighting men continued to hold essentially traditional notions of gender and social organization, and were eager to rebuild their domestic establishments along conventional lines; *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Such an approach to modernism stresses formal and thematic departures from literary tradition (what Samuel Hynes, in his encyclopedic study of the war and English culture, describes as a rupture with the past; *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), generally valorizes the modernist attempt to embrace ideas of fracture and dissonance, and tends towards an integrative and synthetic model of modernism that minimizes differences among writers (of nation, gender, and class, for instance). Moreover, critics who place the war at the crux of a modernist sensibility typically deemphasize the social and literary upheavals of the turn of the century, effectively minimizing the importance for literary chronology of such figures as Wilde, Conrad, and James, and of the sexual and class politics of the period around 1900.

Allyson Booth's *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism and the First World War* embraces this tradition, and can be read as an amplification and expansion of Fussell's thesis: her essential argument is that "the Great War was experienced by soldiers as strangely modernist and that modernism itself is strangely haunted by the Great War" (6). If the standard notion of modernism situates the war as a crucial watershed event, Booth's study goes further, arguing that the defining formal and thematic elements of modernism derive directly from a conceptual reorientation brought on by the war. Booth recognizes that many critics credit the war with establishing a certain mood or aura within modernist texts, yet she depicts these accounts as "hazy" (139) and over-general, inattentive to the specific and profound ways in which the war destabilized systems of thought and language. In place of a general description of postwar sensibility, then, Booth offers a detailed analysis of an array of conceptual problems in war discourse—generally focusing on the body in space and time—which she then compares with a host of civilian modernist writings. "Modernism . . . tries to internalize the perceptual and imaginative repercussions of war," she writes, "to transform them into imaginative material and at the same time always to point toward the battlefield, toward the physical experience of war, and toward the body" (162). Booth's aim is not so much to challenge or redirect dominant ideas about modernism as to enrich and illuminate a discussion that has become relatively commonplace. Thus, if her claim about the influence of the war on civilian modernism remains conventional, her methodology is contemporary: she studies a broad range of texts and practices that cut across disciplinary boundaries, including, for instance, a discussion of both German and English rhetoric surrounding the invasion of Belgium; analysis of war memorials; and a section on postwar movements in British and continental architecture (the International Style and German expressionism).

Booth's study becomes most original—even riveting—when she focuses on general categories of thought and language during the war years, pinpointing the connections between the physical conditions of war and such notions as time, space, factuality, and representation. *Postcards from the Trenches* is organized according to a series of binaries, whose very headings indicate the freshness of Booth's approach: corpses and corpselessness; encirclement and penetration; factuality and unknowability; maps and geographical chaos; chronology and the disruption of time; transparency and opacity. In each case, Booth discusses a range of contradictions that characterized combatant experience on the western front (represented most bracingly in the work of such well-known writers as Sassoon, Owen, Graves, and Edmund Blunden) and then discusses parallel developments in the literature of civilian modernists (including Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, Willa Cather, Wallace Stevens, and Katherine Mansfield). While Booth follows Fussell in focusing on the extreme polarity separating combatant experience from home life, her important move is to credit civilian modernists with intuiting this very discrepancy, and with attempting to capture and explore it in their work. Thus modernism for Booth represents a direct engagement on the part of civilian artists with the extreme disorientation

and contradictoriness experienced by both combatants and civilians during the war.

As an example, the first section of the book ("The Shape of Bodies") focuses on the disjunction between the omnipresence of corpses at the front and the extreme absence of the soldier's body back at home. In a discussion that recalls Eric Leed's influential study of the war (*No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979]), Booth examines the enormously problematic status of the dying, dead, mutilated, and often unrecognizable body at the scene of war. As Leed has shown, the collapse of distinctions between such ordinarily disparate states as life/death, wholeness/fragmentation, and self/other created a psychological configuration with long-lasting ramifications for individual combatants. Booth is lucid in her discussion of such shifts in experience and perception, convincingly suggesting that existential dilemmas surrounding the coherence of the individual self have origins in the material conditions of the trenches. Moreover, Booth posits a great irony in the fact that for civilians, the war represented a period of extreme (and distressing) removal from soldiers' bodies. Far from being immersed in the physical carnage of the front, civilians remained entirely separated from the corpses that so dominated combatant life; even the ordinary conventions of burial and memorial were massively disrupted by a war in which bodies were not brought back to England for interment. Booth argues that this striking loss of innumerable male bodies becomes the focus for civilian modernists such as Woolf (*Jacob's Room*) and Cather (*The Professor's House*), who create elaborate architectural spaces to house and memorialize the absent corpse. The problem of corpselessness (and its ironic contrast with combatant experience) also dominates the development of war memorials. Booth's analysis of these architectural monuments—and more generally of postwar debates surrounding the practice of commemoration—suggests interesting and surprising parallels with the bracketed male bodies of modernist fiction.

Yet there are drawbacks to Booth's methodology. Most troubling is her complete devotion to the structure of parallelism (the "just as" formulation figures repeatedly in each chapter, becoming mechanical over time): she relies consistently on the notion that the parallels between war experience and modernist tropes constitute an important argument about modernism. Thus, for instance, in her discussion of *A Passage to India*, we find repeated—yet over-general and unconvincing—assertions of a strong connection between war discourse and Forster's primary concerns: "The issue of sexual assault stands at the center of both the events of August 1914 and the events in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, published ten years later" (76); "McBryde's ominous suggestion that 'these times' require unusual precautions, his patronizing tone, and Mrs. Callendar's willing retreat to the safety of male protection were all familiar patterns of relations between the sexes during the Great War" (78), "Just as the caves collapse meaningful distinctions by reducing all sounds and all voices . . . to mere 'ou-boum,' the war represents an ethical black hole for Forster, sucking up possible meanings that then disappear forever" (81). While new approaches to such highly canonical texts as *A Passage to India* are always desirable, the problem here is the tenuousness of the alleged connections: the sexual politics that dominate Forster's novel

can be contextualized in a variety of ways, only one (and perhaps not the most central) of which involves the war. Moreover, to draw a parallel between the crisis of the caves and the "ethical black hole" of the war—while provocative—seems to raise more questions than it answers about the way in which the war's chaotic atmosphere became embedded in a larger cultural dialogue, and about Forster's own novelistic appropriation of wartime crises in morality and epistemology.

Indeed, Booth's tendency to structure her argument as a series of allusive comparisons at times threatens to flatten and homogenize the literary material she hopes to illuminate. If one accepts her premise about the importance of the war for modernism's conceptual universe, one naturally wants to know more about how modernists transformed, refigured, aestheticized, and—perhaps most centrally—appropriated such problems for their own artistic purposes. Thus if a text like *The Waste Land* clearly resonates with the war (a conventional point amplified by Booth), Eliot's very thematization of the poetics of transformation calls for further exploration. To recognize modernism's indebtedness to the war in this new, full manner functions as an important starting point, but leaves unanswered crucial questions about how modernism both represented and superseded the war's effects. After all, what is perhaps most remarkable about the narrative that emerges here is the success with which civilian modernists obscured their debt to the war, creating their magnificent literary edifice in its very place. As an exploration of the way the war ultimately endorsed or authorized modernism, then, *Postcards from the Trenches* remains incomplete. Yet as a discussion of the war's role in both destabilizing and creating conceptual categories, and as a corrective to an overly deracinated critical approach to modernism, Booth's study is highly rewarding.

Ohio University

Sarah Cole

*Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Intellectual History* by David A. Hollinger. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. Pp. 178. \$24.95.

David Hollinger's previous study in the history of ideas, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995), emerged from the mid-1990s affirmative action emergency at his home institution, the University of California. It was written, Hollinger says, "in the belief that Americans need to push yet harder against the authority that shape and color have historically been allowed by society to exert over culture" (x). Now, in the essays collected in *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture*, Hollinger considers the cultural effects of one such push: the abrupt end of anti-Jewish hiring discrimination on the faculties of America's elite universities in the wake of the Holocaust.

The bare statistic is dramatic enough. Hollinger takes his paradigmatic numbers from Dan Oren's study of Yale: "There were a scattering of Jews in the university's professional schools prior to World War II, but . . . within

the faculty of Yale College itself—the culturally strategic core of the university—no Jew held the rank of professor until 1946. In that year the philosopher Paul Weiss was appointed. . . . In 1950 Weiss remained Yale College's sole Jewish professor, although by then eight other Jews held that rank in Yale as a whole. But by 1960 the transition was visibly underway: 28 of the university's 260 professors were Jewish, including 6 out of 95 professors in the college. . . . In 1970, 22 percent of the professors in the university were Jewish, as were 18 percent of the professors in the college" (7-8). This demographic change, Hollinger contends, is worth thinking about as the indicator of a change in American culture as a whole: a "transition from Protestant culture to pluralism" (21).

The value of Hollinger's thought here lies in his understanding that that cultural change was "mediated . . . contingent, historically specific" (15). This historical specificity Hollinger explores by documenting it as a history of ideas. So, for instance, he aims to help us understand why it mattered for the sociologist Robert K. Merton to assert in 1942 that (in Hollinger's words) "the moral values for which science [is] ostensibly a vehicle [are] *intrinsic* to science" (92). Merton's idea that there is a relation between science and democracy now seems, as Hollinger says, "naive or uninteresting," if not disingenuous in its blindness to the relation between science and power (81-82). But in 1942 moral values weren't what they are today. If they were compatible with the cultural parochialism of America's universities, perhaps that was a sign that they too were parochial. Merton's claim for the universal applicability of scientific value was thus specifically political, and specifically applicable to history as it was revealing itself in 1942.

So Merton's contribution came to be one of the classic social-scientific texts during the era of Jewish assimilation, and as it effected its changes its own language was enabled to change accordingly. In 1942 Merton's essay rode into ideological combat under the polemical title of "A Note on Science and Democracy," but by 1973, when it had become a part of the textual establishment, it was "The Normative Structure of Science" (82). For Merton, this laying claim to a universal content was the sign of a change more fundamentally than Hollinger himself realized. Hollinger wrote this chapter of *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture* in 1980 and published it in 1983, but it wasn't until 1994 that he learned that Robert K. Merton was born Meyer H. Schkolnick (81).

*Science, Jews, and Secular Culture* is only incidentally concerned with language, but it seems to me to have great value as a textbook of reading. Consider, for instance, Hollinger's analysis of *After Strange Gods*, a series of lectures about literature and culture that T. S. Eliot delivered at the University of Virginia in 1933, published in 1934, and then withdrew from publication. Part of a single sentence on p. 20 of Eliot's little book has become notorious—"reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable"—but for the most part that notoriety has issued only in linguistic skirmishes: defensive readings by (for recent instance) Christopher Ricks, counterattacks by (for recent instance) Anthony Julius. Read in the context of its paragraph, let alone the context of European history in 1933, Eliot's formulation certainly seems vile beyond any defense based on words. Hollinger, however, has done the pedagogically correct

thing and read Eliot historically, in perhaps the most historiographically satisfactory way since World War II. Such a reading allows Hollinger to help us understand that Eliot "was correct to single out Jews, especially freethinking Jews, as a unique threat in the 1930s to the realization in the United States of a Christian community of the sort in which Eliot—and not Eliot alone—would have preferred to live" (18).

That I can now dare to use the word "vile" about one of the greatest poets in the English language may indicate that Hollinger's history has gone on to a triumphantly happy ending. Grounds for such a hopeful belief are certainly an ordinary part of American society today. Robert K. Merton revealed the truth about his name himself, for instance, in an autobiography which it would have been suicidal to publish in 1933 or 1934 or 1942. But perhaps the time will come again when Eliot's way of looking at the world has more practical consequence than Merton's. It certainly is true, at any rate, that American Jewish intellectuals have some reason for their current loss of nerve. It's harder than it once was to be a Zionist, now that Israel's few remaining non-Jewish supporters tend so disconcertingly to be literal-minded Protestants checking off the countdown to Armageddon. It's harder to be a liberal in a time of ethnic self-aggrandizement—especially now that there aren't enough Jews left to be worth considering a minority. And of course the American academy has plenty of reason for its own loss of nerve. Hollinger doesn't see it as his purpose to draw attention to the fact, but the American professoriat, as an economic class, is now dying. The figures for employment of new Ph.D.s demonstrate something not predicted by the dictionary: a crisis can last for thirty years.

In retrospect from this side of the crisis, it appears approximately true that Jews ceased making a culturally distinct contribution to the life of the American mind—*qua* Jews, not just as Americans of the Jewish religion—in 1967. That was the year when the New York intellectual Norman Podhoretz published his swaggering memoir *Making It*, but it was also the year when Israel committed the unforgivable gaffe of winning a war it was supposed to lose. One year later the academic job market collapsed, and neither the community of Jewish intellectuals nor the institution where it made its home has been the same since. Hollinger's history is therefore unavoidably suffused with nostalgia. The book's dust jacket, for instance, is decorated with a group photograph of J. Robert Oppenheimer, James Bryant Conant, and Vannevar Bush at Harvard in 1948—all in black tie, and Oppenheimer in a wing collar. Why are they here? A caption informs us: "All were centrally involved in the building of the atomic bomb during World War II, and in post-war discussions of the role of science in American culture and society." Beyond those factual data, Princeton University Press offers no further explanation. And after all, explanation isn't necessary, because the faces and the body language in the photograph say all that has to be said. This turns out to be a single word, unspoken but unmistakably clear. Twenty years earlier, the word would have been *Jew*, and the picture accordingly couldn't have been taken. By 1948, however, the word was simply *Power*.

But the process of translation didn't stop then. Things have changed for the Jewish intellectual community since Oppenheimer looked into the lens that evening half a century ago, but in *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture* you

won't find the reasons why. To say this, however, is only to say that Hollinger has written less a history of ideas than a history of events at a halfway point. This history carries its subject from scorn to triumph, then ends. The second half of the story will need another book to tell, but the half that Hollinger has given us in *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture* is valuable on its own terms.

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Jonathan Morse

*German Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, edited by Rob Burns. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. xi + 375. \$18.95.

Rob Burns and the other fourteen scholars in *German Cultural Studies: An Introduction* reinforce the Frankfurt School's importance for Cultural Studies in charting the liberating and confining functions of cultural institutions during the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century in the German states. Individuals of various backgrounds, classes, and sexes have constructed these vehicles for negotiating values and social identities and thus for channeling economic and political power through urbanization and the loosening of feudal bonds.

Burns's introduction sets the tone for the volume as a whole. For him, Germany's late establishment as an industrial and unified state, its fascist period after a democratic awakening, and its post World War II restructurings provide fascinating material with which to test Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's notions of mass culture. Robin Lenman, John Osborne, and Eda Sagarra investigate how, in the case of imperial Germany, the educated middle class, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, coalesces and shapes cultural identity through expanding publishing houses, through printing more works such as Goethe's *Faust*, through opening libraries, journals, newspapers, museums, and cinemas (chap. 1). Stephen Lamb and Anthony Phelan track the modernist achievements of Germany's middle class in establishing a democracy and in supporting the socially critical art reflected by the paintings of Otto Dix, the plays of Bertolt Brecht, Marieluise Fleißer, and Friedrich Wolf, and by the films of Richard Oswald, Leontine Sagan, and Georg Pabst (chap. 2). Wilfried van der Will pursues the reversal of modernism's emancipatory potential in the National Socialists' harnessing of technologies of mass communication (chap. 3). Axel Goodbody, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace refute a simplistic equation of the German Democratic Republic with the NS-politics of *Gleichschaltung*, or mass control through ideological uniformity, by charting criticism internal to that state. Two chapters are devoted to West German history. Keith Bullivant and C. Jane Rice emphasize the founding of print media institutions and the interplay of literature, film, and theory in creating the oppositional movement of the 1960s (chap. 4). Then Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will explain the state-subsidized cultural boom in theater, television, and education as a sign of the more varied and socially oriented class stratification which West Germany's Marshall Plan-funded economy produced into the 1980s. Finally, Godfrey Carr and Georgina Paul chronicle in

the former eastern states of the unified Germany another media explosion which both opened up new vehicles for expression and squelched avenues of critique through the financial logic of the Western, capitalist publishing industry.

The work of Burns and his authors is related to that of other scholars such as Leslie Adelson, Russell Berman, and Rob Holub, who similarly interweave cultural, aesthetic, economic, and political phenomena, but more explicitly explore the interrelationship between the Frankfurt School and Cultural Studies, or the Frankfurt School and Deconstruction, Marxism, or Feminism. Holub takes up in *Crossing Borders, Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction* (1992) negotiations of Cultural Studies through the transfer of theory between Europe and the United States. Berman analyzes individual authors and events from Heinrich Heine to the Gulf War in *Cultural Studies of Modern Germany* (1993) while exploring the ramifications of German and French culture as well as U.S. notions of the political and the aesthetic. In framing theory with regards to gender and cultural/religious identity, Adelson connects in *Making Bodies, Making History: Feminism and German Identity* (1993) notions of body-centered experience in the works of recent Frankfurt School-based thinkers like Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge and the literary works of Anne Duden, TORKAN, and Jeanette Lander.

Achieving the broad historical sweep of Berman's book and reasoning as Adelson does that Cultural Studies includes the history of underrepresented groups such as women, the collection of authors in *German Cultural Studies* has made substantial strides in realizing the goals set out in the 1970s by scholars in the Birmingham Center in England and, in the U.S., in the German Studies Association and the Coalition of Women in German. Burns's group integrates into their cultural history recognition of the barriers to women's equal education at the pre-college levels and to their study at universities (chap. 1), their enfranchisement in 1919 and venturing into professions considered appropriate for men (chap. 2), the forms which their cooperation with National Socialist ideology took (chap. 3), the writings of Anna Seghers, Brigitte Reimann, Christa Wolf, and Irmtraud Morgner who helped shape and criticize socialism in the German Democratic Republic (chap. 4), the efforts of postwar women in the Federal Republic of Germany to clear the rubble of bombed buildings, to survive rape by occupation soldiers, and to achieve the equivalent of an Equal Rights Amendment in the 1949 Basic Law (chap. 5), the growth of the West German women's movement as it was spurred on by the films of Helke Sander and Margarethe von Trotta (chap. 6), and women's losses through the legal and economic changes of unification (chap. 7).

The representation of marginalized groups other than women is not as thorough. While the authors on the chapters concerning the post-1945 German states address the cultural history of Southern and Eastern Europeans who came to West Germany as "guest workers" and extended their migrant literary culture to reach into the literary culture of native-speakers of German, they do not acknowledge the Vietnamese and Mozambican workers in the GDR, or the Afro-German citizens in the two Germanies. Furthermore, this collective has recorded the discrimination against gays and lesbians in a cryptic reference to the criminalization of male homosexuality in Paragraph

175 from 1871 but not explained the persecution of gays in concentration camps as part of the history of nationalism. The development of lesbian culture in the Weimar Republic and the different sites at which lesbians could construct a legally sanctioned public sphere in East and West Germany is also conspicuously absent.

Nonetheless, with its Frankfurt School base, Burns's anthology makes important strides in telling the stories of nation-building and modernism in Germany from feminist and multicultural perspectives. A clear lay-out, a manageable list of works for further reading, and an informative chronology contribute to an easy read. An invaluable resource, especially after the post-unification wave of German histories which barely covered gender politics, *German Cultural Studies* clears the way for cultural histories of modern Germany which reflect more upon the country's diverse population in the years to come.

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