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Plato continues to cast a long shadow over the Western rhetorical tradition. Or, as some historians of rhetoric have conceived it, Plato is a dark cloud, an oppressive weight we would best crawl out from under. In Rethinking the Rhetorical Tradition, James Kastely takes quite the opposite position, arguing that Plato, taken together with the tragedians Sophocles and Euripides, is the most valuable classical resource available for rhetorical theorists today. Kastely returns to Plato out of some of the same concerns that have driven historians such as Susan Jarratt and John Poulakos away from Plato: a crisis in civic deliberation and an attempt to reinvigorate rhetoric as an education in just critical dialogic.

In addition to an introduction in which Kastely lays out his project, Rethinking the Rhetorical Tradition is divided into two parts. The first part provides a reading of Plato, Sophocles, and Euripides that teases out the strands of a tragic skepticism Kastely uses in part two to read Jane Austen, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul de Man, and Kenneth Burke, and to redefine contemporary rhetoric. Through his readings, Kastely refigures rhetoric as persuasive refutation. Kastely argues that, under conditions of injustice and inequality, uses of rhetoric must do more than simply persuade. Figuring persuasion largely in terms of a concern for getting things done, Kastely rejects what he characterizes as the long-standing practical emphasis in rhetorical education. Returning to resources in the Platonic dialogues that Kastely claims rhetoric has left behind, he proposes refiguring persuasion as a kind of refutation that challenges what is, as well as what can be, instead of simply exploiting it. Such a refigured persuasion opens rhetor and audience, author and reader, subjects and objects to each other in dialogic encounter. Kastely argues that Socrates in the ancient world and Kenneth Burke in the contemporary world provide exemplars of citizenship grounded in refutation. Socrates in Plato's dialogues and Burke in his criticism embody for Kastely the best civic dimensions of rhetoric because they changed, as they were changed by, the others they encountered through language. For Kastely, neither persuades from positions of absolute authority; in addition, neither refutes from a position of total disregard for the person (and the ideas) being refuted. According to Kastely, persuasive refutation that is thickly embodied in a civic setting reconnects theory with practice through dialogue that acknowledges difference without denying ground for solidarity.

Kastely's argument takes part in an important ongoing conversation concerned with the intertwined themes of the resurgence of rhetoric, the public role of intellectuals, and the problems of injustice. At the same time, however, I was not too persuaded by Kastely's book (even though I share many of his stated concerns), because the persuasiveness of the argument depends on a refutation of the rhetorical tradition that ignores and oversimplifies most contemporary historiography in rhetoric. Generally, I was disappointed with Kastely's representation of the "standard histories of rhetoric." Given the changes in historiographies of rhetoric over the last ten years, talk of standard histories of rhetoric is outdated. I found it untenable for Kastely to reduce the Western rhetorical tradition to a concern for what Plato called
“cookery,” learning to mix together all the ingredients to make something that appeals to the taste without concern for its effects on health.

According to Kastely, the poverty of rhetoric has been a consequence of Aristotle’s influential emphasis on practical matters of persuasion. While such a representation of the rhetorical tradition may serve Kastely’s purposes, it seems to me to ignore to its own detriment the claims of historians of rhetoric such as Susan Jarratt, John Poulakos, Edward Schiappa, and Victor Vitanza who have all argued for a more nuanced understanding of rhetoric’s relationship to its past. While he does make numerous passing references to “interesting scholarship on classical rhetoric,” Kastely glosses over the scholarship of Jarratt, Poulakos, Schiappa, Vitanza, and others by observing that it “does not cite Plato and the tragedians as a source of emancipatory thought” (135).

Scholars of classical rhetoric have not cited the emancipatory possibilities inherent in Plato not because they aren’t interested in Plato (as they continue to be) but because they are participating in the larger resurgence of sophistry. In philosophy as well as rhetoric, emancipatory thought has been developed through renewed interest in sophistry and the First Sophists. I thought it curious that Kastely did not discuss this scholarship more fully, if only to refute it, since his claims about the philosophic rhetoric of persuasive refutation have so much in common with, say, Richard Rorty’s arguments for an emancipatory philosophy. Rorty is especially significant because his widely influential arguments directly refute Plato and Platonism and explicitly reassert sophistry and the First Sophists. For Kastely to persuasively claim that we are ignoring the emancipatory potentials inherent in the Platonic dialogues he would have to take better account of the literature that refutes Plato’s emancipatory value.

Kastely does not totally ignore scholarship in rhetoric. He privileges his readings of Plato by contrasting them to Brian Vickers’s reading of Plato as enemy of rhetoric. Vickers has certainly become a prominent target because of his reading of Plato; but Vickers hardly represents the status quo, as most reviews of his book would attest. Neither does Kastely’s reliance on Vickers do justice to debates about just how we should read Plato’s dialogues and just what Plato’s relationship is to the rhetorical tradition. From Cicero to Augustine to Ficino, Plato was read as a subtle, even cunning, rhetor. For contemporary scholars of rhetoric, competing readings of Plato are indicative of the complex enterprise of rhetoric itself. To fail to engage these readings is to slight a vast literature and to diminish any subsequent definitions of rhetoric.

To his credit, Kastely makes a strong point when he reads Plato’s Gorgias as presenting a philosophical rhetoric which “will continually seek to refute our understandings of ourselves and of others so that these understandings do not become fixed and thereby close us to the voices of others.” He adds that, “If we cannot prevent ourselves from causing inadvertent injury, we can through a philosophical rhetoric open ourselves to claims that we have treated others unjustly” (46). The key to success here is making philosophy more rhetorical, and philosophers more skilled as rhetors. Unfortunately, the dialogue demonstrates this only in the negative, concluding with Socrates’ long monologue to himself. As Kastely observes, “Although the tone of the
dialogue is anything but tragic, Socrates' isolation at the end is a denouement equivalent to that of many ancient tragedies. Unless Socrates can be refuted, the Gorgias threatens to become the tragedy of rhetoric" (47). Of course, Plato does not let Socrates get refuted. So while the Gorgias remains a nuanced exploration of rhetoric, it does not provide strong support for Kastely's claims for Plato's persuasive refutation.

Overall, while Kastely has performed subtle and sophisticated readings of several texts important in the rhetorical tradition, he has not directed those readings in ways that would be persuasive to scholars in rhetoric. This is unfortunate. Kastely's claims for responsible dialogic encounter and rhetoric's deep engagement with justice are worthy of persuasive refutation.

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Clement Hawes's Mania and Literary Style examines how the "manic" or enthusiastic rhetoric articulated by religious radicals during the English Revolution influences Jonathan Swift's A Tale of a Tub and Christopher Smart's Jubilate Agno. Hawes persuasively argues that rather than viewing Smart's poem as the product of madness (as many critics do), we should regard it as an heir to the seventeenth-century tradition of manic rhetoric. Building on Nigel Smith's 1989 Perfection Proclaimed, Hawes defines the inspired speech of seventeenth-century religious radicals as a literary form and identifies its six distinguishing features as: (1) a preoccupation with themes of socio-economic resentment; (2) a 'levelling' use of lists and catalogues; (3) an excessive, often blasphemous wordplay; (4) a tendency to blend and thus level incongruous genres; (5) a justification of symbolic transgression, especially in the context of lay preaching, as prophetic behavior; and (6) imagery of self-fortification against persecution and martyrdom" (9). Throughout his book, Hawes demonstrates how the work of authors ranging from the Ranter Abiezer Coppe to Swift and Smart incorporates these traits and thereby creates new discourses of sexuality and politics.

Hawes sets the stage for his compelling rereading of Smart's Jubilate Agno with an extended rhetorical analysis of prophetic writings of the revolutionary period. Again and again, Hawes identifies the seventeenth-century enthusiasts' texts with resistance to class oppression and with radical political upheaval. "Manic enthusiasm is a particular strategy for speaking and writing with an authority otherwise unavailable to those assigned a lowly social identity. . . . It is . . . the formal projection of an oppositional, sometimes subversive ideology at the level of the subject: the ideology of the 'world turned upside down'" (28). This transformation of individual subjects, he argues, evokes a politics of classlessness: "The manic mode thus attempts to enact the transfigured subjectivity necessary to any realization of its communitarian desires" (80). In general, Hawes focuses on examples that show the re-
igious radicals of the revolutionary period evoking progressive social agendas. He notes the Fifth Monarchist prophet Anna Trapnel on “God’s indifference to social stratification: ‘here [in God] is no respect of persons, but the poor beggar that lyeth in the street, that knows not where to have a bit of bread, hath nothing but a clothing of tatters . . . such a one more respected than a rich Dives that goeth in his velvet and diadems of gold every day’” (42). He does not observe, however, that she responds to a charge of vagrancy not by identifying with “the poor beggar that lyeth in the street” but by asserting her upstanding social status as a taxpayer. I agree with Hawes that the enthusiasts’ rhetoric was informed by pervasive class tensions. He, however, paints a rather too rosy portrait of this class-based rhetoric as producing an egalitarian politics of radical enfranchisement. Many of the religious radicals could be as politically exclusive as the elites they sought to topple. Moreover, the period’s plethora of religious beliefs filtered a whole range of new—including middle-class and proto-communist—political views. Interestingly, while the seventeenth-century radicals seem to exist for Hawes as a benchmark of ideological purity, he acknowledges some of the more pernicious possibilities of millenarianism in his discussion of Smart’s politics: “Jubilate Agno frames various contemporary events in millennial terms, finding in their outcome the predestined triumph of a militant English Protestantism” (207).

Hawes’s chapter on Swift’s A Tale of the Tub more fruitfully mines the notion that manic rhetoric espouses a levelling political agenda. This is because Swift, although for very different reasons, shares Hawes’s view of the religious radicals as destroyers of traditional elites. The patrician Swift loathed the Nonconformists, whom he saw as instigating the chaos of the Revolution and attempting to neutralize distinctions of rank and education. Hawes illustrates how Swift uses his sense of the radicals’ levelling tendencies to critique the state of contemporary belles lettres. “Swift purports to describe a historical development: the revolutionary enthusiast of the mid-seventeenth century modulates . . . into the turn-of-the-century hack” (104). Swift’s literary hacks, who derive influence from vulgar sources, parody the enthusiasts who claim that anyone, regardless of training, can have access to divine knowledge.

After exploring Swift’s parody of manic rhetoric, Hawes offers a lengthy analysis of how Smart’s Jubilate Agno constructively appropriates enthusiastic forms. He persuasively counters strains of Smart criticism that view the poem, because written while the author was incarcerated in a mental institution, as the product of madness and as a form of “private ritual function” (156). Hawes demonstrates how the poem attempts to articulate a public voice through the use of the manic mode. Hawes frames the links between Smart and the seventeenth-century prophets in terms not of loose analogues but of earthy borrowings. For instance, he notices that Smart advances such Puritan shibboleths as the Saturday sabbath and opposition to theatricals (in which, prior to his incarceration, he had once performed). Moreover, in keeping with the tradition of Puritan martyrology, Smart redefines his own imprisonment as political and, like the Quaker leader George Fox before him, he uses his incarceration as a “mode of triumphant authority” (160). These examples directly evoke the revolutionary scene and attest powerfully to
Smart as a writer who expressly incorporates that historical period's rhetorical modes for political purposes.

Hawes's study also illustrates that Smart's appropriation of millennial themes shapes his radical ideas about masculinity. "Smart's affiliation with enthusiastic rhetoric in fact accounts both for the pressure to reaffirm his masculinity in *Jubilate Agno* and his ability to recast that masculinity in unexpected ways" (182). Some of the surprises include the "androgyne" of his bawdy puns that "pushes the metaphor to the point of dissociating gender from the sexed body." Hawes identifies Smart's androgyne as consistent with the "manic topos of gender-reversal" articulated by, among others, the Ranter Coppe who once described himself as "pregnant' with the 'child' of sexual desire" (198). Smart's representation of cuckold's horns also paves the way for a more nuanced definition of masculinity. Hawes suggests that Smart views such horns as part of his "spiritual and artistic weaponry against envy." Smart, for instance, urges men to embrace their horns: "'For when men get their horns again, they will delight to go uncovered.'" As Hawes argues, the willingness to endure humiliation that celebrating cuckold's horns requires constitutes a more fluid vision of masculinity: "The enthusiastic recuperation of a misogynist theme thus produces a paradoxical masculinity — simultaneously abject and exuberant, exposed to all and yet unashamed—that is significantly at odds with a dominant ideal of masculine control and spectatorship" (189).

In undertaking to examine the literary legacy of seventeenth-century prophecy, Hawes himself promulgates a new vision of early modern studies. When he discusses the Fifth Monarchist prophet Mary Cary, she emerges as neither a historical curiosity nor another recuperable woman writer but as a practitioner of manic rhetoric who participates in a literary tradition that shapes Smart's poetry. Hawes does not simply assert that marginalized literatures should be studied but pointedly documents why the seventeenth-century religious radicals form a literary tradition essential to understanding the canonical works of Swift and Smart. In so doing, he effectively "levels" the distinctions between canonical and noncanonical by revealing that one cannot exist without the other.

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Knowledge of contemporary British poetry in the United States, in and beyond the academy, has been in a deplorable condition since the 1970s, when it last seemed possible to imagine that one might frame any question worth asking concerning American relations to recent British poetic practices. The
1970s saw a fair amount of polemic concerning the discontinuities of two national "traditions," most of it concerned with poetry, all of it vulnerable to a blunt totalizing which demonstrated the triumphant ability of "nation" to organize literary study and judgment—as it does still, perhaps more than ever. It remains the case twenty years later that American poetry, particularly varieties of exploratory poetry, still can provoke in England anxious or bullish, defensive or rebarbative commentary of the sort that one can hardly imagine English poetry provoking nowadays in the United States. The temptation stubbornly to assert the coherence and power of national traditions is strong not only among cultural conservatives dedicated to the perpetuation of poetic practices associated with or promoting "little-englandism" but increasingly in other, less visible communities of readers as well—and here I think especially of the small but vital communities of poets and critics dedicated to exploratory practices, where the pressures to locate indigenous varieties of Modernist and postmodernist practice are increasing. But, in the United States, except for a partly voyeuristic and cynical biographical fascination with a few supposedly representative figures, Ted Hughes and Philip Larkin for instance, and the occasional book on Stevie Smith or Geoffrey Hill, recent British poetry just disappeared from critical discourse about poetry after 1979. When in 1987 Hugh Kenner wrote off most of the English twentieth century, rescuing a few writers such as Basil Bunting and David Jones (in a title that said it all, A Sinking Island), his judgments were uncontroversial because academic critical discourse and all but a few American poets pursuing selective affinities in Britain had already given up on British poetry. Even as postcolonial and anglophone studies began to pick up speed, Welsh and Scottish poetry hardly benefitted. Black British poetry did just a little better, the emphasis there being primarily on Afro-Caribbean writing, especially oral and dub poetries, too often exclusively an occasion to explore the shifting interface of West Indian and British cultural and national identities with small attention to the aesthetic and representational practices of particular poems.

The reasons for the eclipse of an entire field are many, of course, and I must suggest them here in an unsatisfactory, cryptic manner. It must be admitted first that the last twenty years of academic fashion have not been especially good to any contemporary poetry. American deconstruction was notorious for lingering over a canonical British Romanticism and Anglo-American and French Modernism; New Historicism and Cultural Studies are still under construction when it comes to contemporary poetry. The postwar introduction and popularization of the contemporary as a legitimate field of study and the acceleration of American Studies brought about by and continuing in the wake of an Atlanticist consensus meant that eventually a famous anthology called the "New American" poetry would give birth to a tiny industry in academic studies of Modernist and "postmodernist" poetry. Momentum developed there, attached to a boom in poststructuralist and post-Marxist theory, allowed Language Poetry, which like the New American Poetry was sustained largely by activities beyond the academy, to gain a toehold, though the work required of language poets for this institutional space—critical and organizational work both—was much heavier than that of their predecessors among "experimental" poets because of the expansion
of poetic practices encouraged by MFA programs and declining cultural capital attached to the study of poetry and contemporary poetry in the academy. Add to this scenario an emergent multicultural educational program which usefully complicated American studies but too often remained provincial in leaving national boundaries underinterrogated or intact; postcolonial and anglophone studies troubling these boundaries so far are almost entirely limited to narrative and Bildungsroman. Add to this, finally, the structure of British educational systems and intellectual life itself; an apathy concerning contemporary poetry among academics, perhaps especially those on the left; the consignment of all semi-official reading of contemporary poetry in Britain to the sub-university level; and an economic catastrophe in education and the public funding of the arts brought on by Thatcherism. These conditions have prevented some of the more exploratory British poets from publishing books in editions larger than three hundred books which anyway would turn out to be unavailable in the United States and therefore unknown to all but a few American readers, most of them poets.

It's important to understand that all varieties of British poetry have fallen off American maps, the most self-conscious practices which depend upon the smallest audiences to begin with having suffered the worst, not so much falling off academic maps as never having appeared there. To get a sense of what I am talking about one might simply count the essays and books on Charles Olson or John Ashbery published in the United States and then do the same for the British poet Jeremy Prynne, who deserves comparison with both. Even in England, scholarship and criticism touching upon Ashbery and Olson exceed work on Prynne, and Prynne's is perhaps the most recognized poetry among poetics at odds with prevailing practices—important essays and recently a book have been devoted to it. In the United States few of even the most generic surveys of American poetry can proceed altogether in ignorance of what used to be called the avant-garde except willfully; if the critic's values are otherwise, he or she will at least have heard of Olson, say, or "Language Poetry." In England most similar studies proceed in ignorance of whole areas of poetic practice without embarrassment.

Such a depressing state of affairs might be cracking a little at the edges on both sides of the Atlantic, or at least the appearance of the two books under review here along with other essays beyond them allow one to hope so. If it seems certain that British literatures in their totality will not regain the central place they once held in the academic study of literature in the United States and contemporary poetry even less so—no more Audens or even Larkins—we can at least see that information flow about ongoing developments in British poetry is not altogether shut down. Romana Huk and James Acheson's collection is a good beginning in this regard, gathering essays by British and American academics discussing a broad spectrum of British, Welsh, and Scottish poetries. An editorial intent to bring the eclectic contents and considerable list of contemporary poets into focus in the book's moment is suggested early on in Huk's introduction; she together with the book's contributors will demonstrate that the center of British poetry has shifted, become more capacious. No longer will contemporary British poetry be defined quite so powerfully by the poetic and cultural values of the Movement and its more timid and flamboyantly cynical progeny. Discussing the intro-
duction to an influential 1993 Bloodaxe anthology which self-consciously borrowed the title of a famous anthology edited by A. Alvarez, The New Poetry, Huk qualifies the editors' celebration of the "new pluralism" evident in their selection of younger poets—the anthology does represent greater diversity in terms of race, region, and gender than recent competitors among books with designs on the center, though even the "avant-garde," too long white and male like the rest of British poetry, has learned this lesson in anthologies such as The New British Poetry (Paladin, 1988). Huk rightly notes that what distinguishes the moment in British poetry is not a new pluralism but a "newly seen or newly acknowledged pluralism" (3). The hold of the Movement not only on poetic practice but critical journalism and evaluation will be made to give way; the commitment to this is underscored not only by the introduction but also by the decision to use Antony Easthope's account of what he takes to be a wrong turn in Donald Davie's career as the book's opening essay.

Unsurprisingly, given the diverse materials taken up by the essays, Huk argues that "comparisons of 'worth' between the different poetries" (those covered in the book and manifest in a new pluralism in British practice) are "difficult and even offensive" (4). Such a refusal of the presumptuous authority and inevitably situated polemics of evaluation is not only common enough these days as rhetoric; it is belied by the introduction's professed interest in what the poets discussed in the volume share—a "recognition . . . of the situadedness of self-hood" which makes "the return to a 'poetry of place' seem particularly necessary now . . . [r]ecovering some sense of the ways in which places map out selves rather than vice versa and of the ways in which constructed spaces perpetuate, through learned means of perceiving them in language, the influence of long unwritten histories of power dominations, occlusions, and subtle persuasions." Huk understands that, among many poets more attuned to international Modernism and postmodernism, attention has recently been directed otherwise, away from what is meant here by a "poetry of place," shifted "from referent to signifier" (12-13). Since these same poets have also been "marginalized" they too will be gathered here into the fold, the fact of being previously underrepresented in the center for whatever reason being the crucial evaluative principle at work. Huk's concluding renunciation of a single critical frame or linear history—"it is no longer possible to characterize developments decade by decade as has been customary in British poetry" (13)—is more to the point when it comes to the experimentalists taken up by the book. The standard and still credible if incomplete account has it that these poets have been marginalized by the continuing power of an Englishness Easthope will describe as rooted in an empiricist "epistemological scenario in which the real is conceived to exist in itself as object such that it can be known more or less directly by the unprejudiced observer, a subject posed in correspondence to that object as equally given and free-standing" (28). One problem is that, among the poets discussed in the volume in connection with specific regional, racial, and gendered identities, there are those still working more or less with an empiricist model, and among the experimentalists and their supporters the problem is not always "Englishness" per se but specific accounts of it. The critic Clive Bush, for instance, who is very much an advocate of experimental poetries,
is intent in his book on five poets of the so-called British Poetry Revival to secure the position of these poets within an ongoing and distinctly English tradition of dissent going back to the Levellers and having as its strongest voice William Blake.

I have already mentioned Easthope’s essay, where the author declares himself saddened at the prospect of describing the descent of Davie’s career into Tory nostalgia. Davie’s early poetry, here linked with Jean-Paul Sartre, Jack Kerouac and J. V. Cunningham, had as a part of its rejection of Romanticism a refusal of “the Romantic dyad in which subject becomes object” and “the convention of seeking an ever spontaneous, ever original expression.” “A Winter Talent,” the example taken, instead “accepts its own textuality . . . acknowledges the dependence of idea on sound, intention upon language” (19). Easthope thinks that even Davie’s neo-Augustan turn from Romanticism, while it “begins to unpack the empiricist tradition . . . by exploring the contingencies of the individual subject, its situatedness” (31), turns out to be limited, unable to follow the French beyond Sartre’s “influential reading of Heidegger” (31) toward poststructuralism and instead retreating into empiricism and the tradition Davie identified with Thomas Hardy’s work. But one hopes even in a short essay for some speculation about what accounted for such a turn; in Davie’s case it was certainly not the recognition of the macho posturing on view in French existentialist writing.

Following Easthope’s essay is John Matthias’s on Roy Fisher, which makes perfect sense given that Fisher early on was co-opted by Davie into the tradition of Hardy while insisting that he belonged somewhere else. Matthias’s informed and sympathetic reading links Fisher’s early work in City and elsewhere with the Modernism of constructivists like Malevich and Tatlin, avant-gardistes who would necessarily be at odds with the more insular tendencies of the Movement, before going on to discuss the “multifaceted assemblage” and “polytheism without gods” of Fisher’s book-length poem A Furnace (1986). Other essays in the book by Alistair Niven, Cairns Craig, and Linden Peach take up Black British, Scottish, and Welsh poetry (respectively) and make for good introductions to some of it, alert to without overemphasizing lines drawn by the use of the vernacular and nation language (but without taking up the matter of poetry written in Welsh, for instance), sensitive to generational differences like those distinguishing James Berry’s Caribbean nostalgia from the attention to the politics of racist England in Linton Kwesi Johnson’s poetry. Important if now familiar issues such as the purposes and limits of discourses of authenticity, the nature of representational practices and a politics of locality, help structure these essays and allow the critics to sort among poets, searching for (sometimes surprising) affinity and difference. Nicholas Zurbrugg contributes an essay on Ian Hamilton Finlay’s concrete poetry; Paul Giles weighs in on the careers of Thom Gunn and the much overrated womb-tunnels and hawk screams of Ted Hughes’s post-Jungian mythopoeia; Huk takes up the question of “commitment” in one of the book’s more densely contextualized essays on Jon Silkin and his magazine Stand in Leeds; Edward Larissey isolates three poets from the Carcanet anthology of late Modernist poetry, A Various Art (1987)—Prynne, Andrew Crozier, and the late Veronica Forrest-Thomson, whose post-Empsonian
scholarly defense of artifice has had admirers in the United States as well as England.

With more space I might take up my pleasure or disappointment with each of these essays—Larissey is provocative for instance on the “desire for a lost sense of the transcendent” in Prynne’s most influential work *The White Stones* (1969), which remains a remarkable achievement, and he is right to note that “resonant closure” is one thing distinguishing these poems from some of their possible models—Ashbery, Olson—though the effect of closure in these poems, sometimes more acoustic than discursive, might be linked to cultural frames also distinguishing Prynne from some of his American peers. On the other hand, like nearly everybody else, Larissey seems unsure of what to do with Prynne’s more recent and resistant, perhaps hermetic poetry. But I think that he is right in suggesting that, among the three poets he extracts from the anthology, Andrew Crozier is the one closest to a practice following most exactly from an American Modernism in the Pound-Williams tradition. I might also mention R. K. Meiners’s essay on Geoffrey Hill for its boldly polemical assertion that Hill’s “historical and linguistic anxiety” (230) has assimilated and moved beyond the dominant forms of modernism and postmodernism both—and not towards the nostalgic conservatism it is sometimes taken for but a “conservatism with a vengeance” that Meiners clearly admires, aligning it with Allen Tate and posing it against Thacherism. One doesn’t find much intelligent politically conservative discourse about poetry in the United States these days, but this is an exception.

I have left aside four essays that might be clustered as a group—Claire Buck’s on poetry and the women’s movement, C. L. Innes on women poets of “many parts,” Vicki Bertram’s on the question of “postfeminist” poetry, and Linda Kinnahan’s on Carol Ann Duffy, whose dramatic monologues and other poems Kinnahan would rescue from the awards offered them by a literary establishment in order to find them quite self-conscious “in their investigations of gender-specific ideologies of the discursive structures we call poetic form” (246). Duffy is one of the poets celebrated in the Bloodaxe anthology mentioned above, and indeed her work demonstrates that not only is the new literary center a little more flexible for its inclusion of women and others historically “other,” it has also absorbed at least some superficial elements of Modernist practice and recent critical discourses concerning the social construction of the self. Among these fine essays on women’s writing, which taken together present a useful dialogue on several subjects pertinent to that writing, I am most taken by Buck’s, especially by paragraphs sketching the contextual history of the women’s movement in Britain and supporting the argument that “the cultural location of feminist poetry in Britain emerges as most clearly different from that of poetry in the U.S. women’s movement, even despite the influence of the United States on British feminism” (99). The confidence that Adrienne Rich and others have had in the importance of poetry to the women’s movement, Burke says, can be attributed to “the professionalization of the poet’s role within the academy in the United States” and an “identifiable mainstream tradition allied to democratic ideals” (100). The professionalization which Buck refers to is a much more recent and limited development in England, and with regard to “democratic ideals” she quotes Raymond Williams’s remarks on the failed opportunity of
postwar Labour governments to opt for more democratic forms of culture; the odd split between a more progressive social policy and "a model of good culture"—an aristocratically inflected nostalgia for recognized forms of "high culture" designed for the edification of the middle class, evident for example in specific BBC poetry programs—is a phenomenon worth noting. I would add to Buck's remarks the claim that the professionalization of poetry in the United States university has absorbed the therapeutic pedagogies everywhere distinguishing the American university (even today). Several of the essays taking up the influence of feminist discourse and action on women's poetry identify differences evident in practice with regard to poetic models of representation, self, and expression; here as elsewhere it's quite a distance to travel from Angela Hamblin's "I really know/you/woman friend/and I like what/i know" (90) to the poetry of Wendy Mulford and Denise Riley, which has absorbed elements of post-Marxist and poststructuralist critique and much of Modernism's claims on behalf of the rights of the signifier, and this is not even to mention the work of younger women such as Maggie O'Sullivan and Caroline Bergvall not discussed in the book. Bertrams's essay is good for reminding one how little women's poetry has been accepted or recognized in any of the camps of recent British poetry; Innes's offers useful readings of the poetry of women of color such as Grace Nichols's *i is a long memoried woman* (1983) and Jean Binta Breeze's work; both women extend and revise the nation-language and "calibanizations" powerfully modelled by the Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite.

If Huk and Acheson's book might serve as a good introduction to recent British poetries, it is weakest in its representation of exploratory poetries. Here especially the American reader needs critical assistance, not because the poetries are "difficult" but because the books and journals devoted to them are very difficult to obtain. Americans will purchase Clive Bush's book only by writing directly to its publisher, Talus Editions, c/o Department of English, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS. Bush writes about five poets associated with what the most prolific critic and the only institutionally based scholar among them, Eric Mottram, called the British Poetry Revival, a period which might be defined in slightly broader terms than Mottram allowed as beginning in the early sixties and continuing up through 1976. The narrative more enabling than legitimizing of the British Poetry Revival, still extant in nearly mythic shape among specific poets in Britain, involves the British Art Council's struggle with a group of British poets led by Mottram among others. The Poetry Society had been taken over and its ancient journal *Poetry Review*, which, long the site of neo-Georgian and Betjemanian fustian versifying, was for a moment opened to American and Continental as well as British Modernist and postmodernist poetry. Cultural conservatism and little-englishism reared its ugly head quickly, however, and started after the newly-seated crew. They then resigned protesting the harassment of official inquiries and other editorial impositions from above. The moment passed and was temporarily lost to literary history amid the erasures of Thacherism. The problem with this story is not only that its retelling can justify or allow a continuing sense of victimization and resignation, but also that it fails to truly acknowledge the extent to which vacuous culture czars were responding to what was after all prevailing taste among
most poetry audiences in Britain. Sixties countercultural infusions carried largely by other and more typically popular art forms allowed for a brief period in which readings even by experimental and oppositional poets were relatively well attended and made for hybrid crossings and blurred boundaries between an old-style populist poetry and newer post-Ginsberg models, but the moment was already passing, the audiences shrinking, when the editors stepped down. The five poets "out of dissent" Bush selects are Thomas A. Clark, Allen Fisher, Bill Griffiths, Barry MacSweeney, and Mottram. As he notes, he might have chosen others such as Tom Raworth, who has been a vital force in several British and American scenes since 1960, or Bob Cobbing, Brian Catling, Peter and John Riley, John James and others. All men, but that was the nature of the scene then.

Except for Mottram, Bush notes, none of these writers are travelers of educational routes given to issuing celebrated British poets. Americans will find that Clark's poetry bears some resemblance to the Objectivism of Oppen and Niedecker, though it absorbs other influences such as Ian Hamilton Finlay's concrete poetry as well. MacSweeney is very much the pupil of Basil Bunting, his condensare alternating between bile and sentiment and having also benefitted from study of Rimbaud and French symbolism. Mottram's collage and mythopoetic investigations owe something to Charles Olson and, behind Olson, Pound and Williams. Griffiths's work is really not comparable to any American work I know, situated as it is in an odd space between esoteric archaic materials and traditions of sound poetry derived from Kurt Schwitters and others; its first subject someone once described to me astutely as "the law," the famous tattoos of Griffiths, like the poetry itself, indicating his knowledge of biker and homeless subcultures at odds with it. Allen Fisher's work, the most diverse and substantial among Bush's grouping for this reviewer, really got under way in the various books of his Place project, where Olson, MacDiarmid, and Pound are among the models for a poetry intent on locating its processes in a local space (Lambeth). Bush is correct to note the greater materialist emphasis in Fisher when he's seen against the most important model, Olson, as well as the carnivalesque elements in the work. Toss in the influence of Jackson Mac Low, Joseph Beuys, and others and one can begin to understand how Fisher troubles and extends the boundaries of processual and procedural compositional methods. I'd add that Fisher's prosodic resources are more diverse than Olson's even as they offer less of (have little interest in) a signature style, and I'd note too that this sequence of books, composed partly under the sign of Situationist discourse, represents one of the most sustained ecological critiques in recent poetry. Fisher's more recent work in the books of Gravity as a Consequence of Shape moves beyond the earlier practice and into a postmodern space of multiple discourses contesting for focus within accelerated economies in what is often an idiosyncratically and densely textured narrative poetry employing quasi-Blakean types such as the "Artist," the "Burglar," and the "Mathematician." Bush's exegesis, aided by correspondence with Fisher, is very useful in locating and explaining some of the relevant sources. Fisher knows more about science and mathematics than most humanities academics, and it helps to know the limits of catastrophe theory for him or the fact that the cluster of discourses
gathered by Fisher in the figure of the Mathematician has at its core the German mathematician David Hilbert.

Bush presents detailed readings across the careers of his five poets, framing them with an inadequate introduction and conclusion which paints a tradition of English dissent in broad strokes suggesting the transhistorical. One hoped for a more thickly situated history of the social and political frameworks these poeties are produced within and intersect, but perhaps that's too much to expect in a book already so long. Bush's own liberal-socialist politics enter the book periodically in eruptions moaning about the inability of Britain's elite to acknowledge an imperial past; the persistence of class values in education and elsewhere; the anti-intellectualism, nostalgia, and populism of Britain's mainstream literary press; and particular currents in "theory" offering little more than "a choice between the constructed fatalisms of economic and technological process, or any other drift structure against what they persistently miscall an 'avant-garde'" (12). Bush's beef with "theory," which he clearly reads, involves its shrinking of agency and especially its neglect of poetry; he speaks of deconstruction as turning "all texts into pathological preparations which brought the buried to light with forensic preparation" (11), whatever that means. The prose, with its many virtues and also vices, is surely modelled partly on Mottram's. It is erudite and capacious, high-minded even, as it moves among and between the diverse intellectual traditions and discourses the poeties are shaped by or take up themselves. As in the discussion of Fisher, this intellectual history can suggest a mastering poet-figure the actual poetry consciously resists, but it does have considerable exegetical utility. Elsewhere, the poetry becomes merely an occasion to talk about something else, disappearing for five pages as we read Bush on Mallarmé or Ricoeur. The chapter on Clark is especially prone to endless excursions leaving Clark far behind; in some eighty pages we encounter remarks on Lorine Niedecker, Jonathan Williams, Giordano Bruno, Lucretius, "the Hegelian problem of inner and outer" (48), Simone Weil, Democritus, Gramsci, Wittgenstein, Virilio, Foucault, Bachelard, Sartre, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Creeley, Oppen, and Williams beyond Mallarmé and Ricoeur. I had to keep flipping back to the few lines of Clark quoted to remember what had occasioned the digressions. A frustrating tendency in a book otherwise useful for indicating some of the intellectual (if not social) contexts of the work and careful in tracing developments in it.

Indeed, Bush's book is too capacious for me to do justice to here, except to note that together with Robert Hampson and Peter Barry's Manchester University Press collection of essays, *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible* (1993), and N. H. Reeve and Richard Kerridge's Liverpool book, *Nearly Too Much: The Poetry of J. H. Prynne* (1995), it surely indicates that alternative British poetry is beginning an exercised swim through the deep pools of British universities. On the basis of Bush's book, if not the other two, it is worth asking to what extent the British academy will be able to accommodate this poetry it has never previously paid any attention to without recasting it in terms of its essential Englishness. One of the recurrent tendencies in Bush's book, for instance—and here I isolate just one of many issues I might discuss given space—is his need to insist that "It took a while for the American writing to be absorbed, transcended, and then the explosion began" (14). One
understands where such boosterism comes from; these poets and their allies have been vulnerable for their international and American engagements. A British critic might hear the words of my review—"post-Olsonian"—and cringe a little. In the wake of the ambitiousness—and the long poems—of Pound, Williams, Zukofsky, Stein, H. D., Crane, Rukeyser, Hughes, Olson, Duncan, Ashbery, Ronald Johnson, Susan Howe, Ron Silliman, and many other Americans, British poetry in its prevailing shapes has often seemed unambitious, in retreat not only from Modernism and postmodernism but from the twentieth century. Bush needs to show that this has not always been the case or doesn't represent the whole story. He thinks he needs to write his subjects into an alternative but distinctly English tradition, which is, as I suggested above, thinly sketched at best, floating free of recent and specific contingencies. This strikes me as both understandable and unfortunate given the limits and the possibilities of internationalism in the arts today. Moreover, for an American reader, his need to counter the Movement's definition of Englishness leaves Bush vulnerable to a rhetoric which has its own chauvinistic excesses and blindnesses. Nevertheless, the book is an important and necessary intervention.

Miami University

Keith Tuma


Studies which consider how the body is represented in multiple texts from canonical literature to fashion plates and how the body, in its turn, represents broader cultural concerns continue to produce rich scholarship. Some of the most insightful work pays closest attention to how cultural anxieties are conducted through various discourses to discipline the corporal body and so achieve stability of the social body. It is in this spirit that George Hersey proposes that the figure art which arises in Hellenic Greece, is elaborated in the Renaissance, and revived in the Enlightenment presents a canonical body, marked by sexually selectable features, that has pressured mating choices for the past twenty-five hundred years. By presenting normative proportions for the human body, this art has reinforced a preference for those proportions that, Hersey argues, continues to channel our libidinal energy and which recurs even in comic books and popular skin magazines.

Hersey opens by proposing that humans, in concert with other species, manipulate biological sexual markers to enhance their sexual selectability. He identifies four primary manipulative modes and traces their display in a dazzling diverse selection of figures. Borrowing, the practice of attaching sexual attractors from other species, is traced by Hersey through the Cecil Beaton portrait of Marlene Dietrich with an orchid open to expose its stigma and ovaries, among other examples. Augmentation, the multiplying and enlargement of attractors, is considered in long-tailed birds, codpieces, and ruched necklines. The translation of a sexual marker from one bodily location to an-
other he finds in both the lances of Greek youths and the grenade packs of comic superheroes. He sees exchange, the practice of mimicking the attractors of the opposite sex, in everything from the genital displays of primates to male dressing that emphasizes the chest. Taken together, these manipulations reproduce on the body an enhanced and amplified chart of sexual readiness and desirability, a chart, Hersey proposes, that exemplifies Darwin’s theory (not to mention Freud’s, which he doesn’t) that the sex drive organizes and determines much of human evolutionary and cultural change. Hersey then moves to a consideration of how these sexually desirable bodies are joined to socially and spiritually desirable characteristics through the figures of Greek heroes and Christian saints, drawing insightful relays between theological discourses designed to discipline the faithful and artistic discourses which encourage spiritual imitation of the sexually desirable.

Hersey then turns his attention to what he describes as the canonical body. In a bit of the scholarly virtuosity that embellishes much of his text, he reproduces the original Greek word for canon and then follows it through its use as weaving rod, a chalk line, an architectural molding, a ruler, and a literary list. He concludes: ‘Inwardly, then, the word ‘canon’ carries the notion of prescription, demarcation, proper preparation... Not only have canonical bodies traditionally populated works of Western art, but we can also measure ourselves and others against those very canons’ (43-44). Canonical bodies, Hersey argues, are those first delineated by Greek sculptor Polykleitos, whose lost work enumerated the proportions of the beautiful and so desirable body (or perhaps vice versa). Hersey explores the range of variations through numerous figures and treatises, including those of Alberti, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Dürrer, and Lomazzo and finds that they constitute a set of stable parameters that constitutes a Western canonical body. He reads these bodies as sharply differentiated from those figures which preceded them and from bodily representations in other cultures. Through Lomazzo, he elaborates on the connections made between bodily features and interior states, connections even more complex than those first discussed between bodies and spirits. This chapter, which closes with a look at American sculptor William Wetmore Story, serves as conclusion to Hersey’s description of what are canonical, sexually selectable bodies and as transition to the book’s second movement, which explore how these idealized figures are engaged by various nineteenth-century sciences of the body.

This is the heart of Hersey’s argument. The anthropology emerging in this period, while claiming objectivity, is deeply informed by these notions of canonical bodies and uses them—in anthropometrics, statistics, racial categorizations—to construct hierarchies of bodily types. He follows most closely those texts that distinguish between Hellenic and Hebraic peoples, laying the groundwork for his examinations of the emergence of the eugenics movements in numerous locations and the fertile ground of fear of biocultural degeneracy it worked. American anthropologist W. H. Sheldon’s system of categorizing bodies numerically as endomorphs, ectomorphs, and the privileged mesomorphs comes in for close study, as do the eugenic propositions of Francis Galton. Again, Hersey considers the canonical bodies informing the scientific bodies and translates those bodies into current figures in advertisements and comic figures. By the time Hersey begins to map Nazi prop-
agenda onto the preparatory canonical body, Naziism seems inevitable. Perhaps most interesting is his exploration of the improvisations made by Nazi artists. Not only are the figures of artists such as Arno Breker and Adolf Ziegler at the extreme end of the height parameters, but the shoulders are “huge, beyond all precedents discussed” (160). These Nazi super-Aryans exhibit the extreme mesomorphism Hersey finds dominating current figurative art.

Hersey concludes with a look at mesomorphic extremism. Through an inventive reading of body builders and comic superheroes, Hersey explores the ways these figures hyperbolize sexual attractors and return figure art “to the pre-Polykleitan period in art, and to the parahuman varieties of physique we see in prehistoric sculptures. Nothing could more clearly mark the end of ‘canonic’ period in figure design” (179).

Hersey is perhaps his own best critic when he announces in the introduction that “I am starting these hares but will probably not be around when they reach the finish line” (xv). He does, indeed, raise many questions that are either answered with such brevity that they hardly do the questions justice or they are dismissed. Perhaps the most compelling gap in the book is Hersey’s jump over medieval images of the body. Acknowledging that these images are not in the least canonical, he offers no explanation for the departure from the canon other than to note that they have “less to do with sexuality than with fertility and decay” (xv-xvi). Nor, in his conclusion, does he make any attempt to connect the current noncanonical bodies to that era, returnning them instead to the prehistoric era. Also occasionally troubling are the ways in which he refers to female figures as self-presentations without clarifying that these figures are in every case, rather, presentations of the female by a male and presentations of the female as sexually available for the male.

Still, this text offers rich suggestions and creative analysis which lends itself well to cultural studies of conceptualizations of the body, rhetorical investigations of the relays between the figurative and textual, and historical considerations of the complex relations between science and art. Hersey’s writing is exceptionally lucid and frequently delightful. While Hersey’s thesis that Western figure art has pressured selection is, as he points out, unfalsifiable in Karl Popper’s terms, he still succeeds in making a compelling case for its validity.

Wayne State University

Barbara Dickson


In his opening chapter to Mistaken Identities, Peter McDonald declares that his most ambitious aim “is to discard as far as possible the agendas of identity-discourse” present in both modern and contemporary Northern Irish poetry, and in how this poetry is received by critics (17). His desire is that readers take a wider, more objective, and dispassionate look at poetry. If it is
possible for both poet and critic to forsake such narrow prisons of identity as Protestant/Catholic, Planter/Gael, Unionist/Nationalist, then identity itself will no longer be fixed and static but, instead, fluid and dynamic. McDonald is well aware of the difficulties which will need to be surmounted before such a new day can come to pass. Politics, religion, and identity have for so long been intertwined in the North of Ireland that it will be difficult, for better or worse, to separate them. Furthermore, so much excellent poetry has resulted from poets having had to wrestle with these issues, that one wonders if such a new vision will lead to the emergence of an inferior body of poetry. Also, McDonald notes that his own background "as a Belfast-born Presbyterian" makes the kind of ideal objectivity which he seeks to achieve difficult, and this is why he refers to his study as, at least in some respects, a polemic (18).

The difficulties presented by the task and the limitations of McDonald's polemic notwithstanding, what is most compelling about Mistaken Identities is this: by its final page, McDonald proves, by his insightful readings of the work of Ciaran Carson, Michael Longley, Paul Muldoon, and others, that the movement towards a more fluid representation of identity in Northern Irish poetry has been under way in the poetry itself for quite some time, and now the moment has come for critics to catch up with these developments.

Throughout the first four chapters of his study, McDonald details ways in which notions of identity have been ill-used in poetry and criticism. For the most part, the treatment is evenhanded with discussions of the work of writers from across the religious and political divides. Furthermore, McDonald writes an excellent chapter on the work of Derek Mahon and Tom Paulin, two poets who have positioned themselves away from the mainstream and whose poetry, because of its singularity, demands separate treatment. What is clear to McDonald is that whether identity is defined by MacNeice or Montague, it can only be deficient because it leads to generalities and ends in inadequate oversimplification. The difference between Mahon and Montague, as McDonald sees it, is that "Mahon seems to win a freedom for the poetic voice not through a command of historical perspective, but by a rejection of it; where for Montague and others, history corroborates a shared superiority and contempt" (85). For Mahon, "the poetic voice, in order to establish itself and to survive, has to work out its own superiority to history" (85). McDonald rejects the tenet that an ongoing narrative between the Northern Irish poet and history is a necessary ingredient for good poetry which places him in direct opposition to such commentators as Seamus Deane, David Lloyd, Terry Eagleton, and others.

Only if identity is seen as being fluid will it be useful to poetry. If it is not, it will too inflexible to be of benign use to the poet. In recent times, Ciaran Carson and Paul Muldoon have subverted the lyric, which has given poetic shape to the poetry of Northern Ireland, and turned both literary form and notions of identity inside out. These poets, with great dexterity and serious intent, have produced work that is less earnest in tone, more formally complex, and less easy to pin down thematically. It is likely that these poets, through their reaction to the structures of inherited form, are also reacting to other failed structures which have provided each of them with inadequate, received personal identities. As literary movements skeptical of form and sure of the limitations of narrative emerged on mainland Europe and in the United States in
the wake of World War II, so now has a similar postmodernism taken root in the poetry of Northern Ireland as a result of the Troubles. McDonald shows that a new generation has arrived.

The readings of individual poems are excellent. Not only is McDonald quick to point out ways in which a work succeeds, but he is willing to debunk false tones and posturing in his favorite poets. His chapter on Michael Longley is impassioned and brilliant and sets the stage for a reevaluation of Longley’s poetry and its place in the Northern Irish canon. Of all the poets discussed who are older than Carson and Muldoon, Longley is seen as the one who is best able to accommodate the strictures of the lyric poem with an expansive view of identity.

In places, McDonald’s polemic limits the persuasiveness of his narrative. He is inclined, for example, to view Seamus Heaney’s earlier poetry purely as an exploration of political identity and, consequently, renders it less complex than it is. Certainly, as McDonald suggests, the speaker’s hackles in “The Toome Road,” from Heaney’s 1979 volume Field Work, are raised by the early morning appearance of a column of British soldiers. However, this invasion is not merely political because it is also an invasion of the quiet world of farming and the serene one of early morning in a rural place. Certainly, Heaney has a political identity, but he also has more than this to carry with him: he is also a farmer, poet, countryman, among other identities, whose artistic personality is laden with much of the fluidity McDonald finds so praiseworthy in Muldoon. Another difficulty presented by McDonald’s polemic pertains to the balance of citation. Far too often, other commentators are cited then quickly condemned for their inadequacies. What’s missing here are counterbalancing sources to support McDonald’s own points of view. Disingenuously, because of the absence of sources to support many of his own more strident views, McDonald gives the impression of smugness, as if none of the critics who have discussed postmodernism before him are worth quoting. It would have been instructive too had McDonald detailed his objections to literary criticism as it is practiced in the Irish Republic and “its out-stations in the world of Irish Studies in the USA” so that we might know what exactly it is he wants to replace (208). In general, though, the polemic does work. Even in places where I felt myself to be in strong disagreement with him, I was compelled to read on by the quick pace of the narrative, and by a developing admiration for McDonald’s honesty and his tremendous gift for reading poetry closely.

At heart, McDonald is uncomfortable with critical approaches to poetry which seek to place it within social, political, and economic contexts. But he does not yearn, as others do, for the return of the New Criticism. Instead, he sees freshness and originality in the fluidity of form and the postmodern playfulness which has begun to deconstruct received notions of identity in Northern Irish poetry. This new outlook has resulted in a more complex sense of self and place, and a new poetics. But postmodernism, as we know from contemporary American poetry, has its own limitations since it can favor the novel over the substantive and can result in a sort of poetry in love with its own cleverness. Mistaken Identities is a polemical and passionate look at Northern
Irish poetry: McDonald breaks new ground and his arguments will challenge scholars in the field to reexamine long-held critical tenets.

Eamonn Wall


Arthur Efron (SUNY-Buffalo) stands out as an interestingly dissident literary scholar. As we used to say a couple of generations ago, he serves as an “engaged critic,” one avowing ideological purposes of libertarian cast. His first book, *Don Quixote and the Dulcinated World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971) provided an unusual reading of Cervantes’s novel, and a contrarian debriefing on many of the conservative *Quixote* commentators. The larger concern posited a culture, still partly ours, which idealizes its repressions—as in the figure of Dulcinea. The main critical argument holds that Cervantes savages all that and, as with his commentator, demands a “letting go” in spontaneity, physicality, responsiveness, sensuality, and freedom from repression and authority. It is an intriguing, however one-sidedly insistent, reading.

Expanding that view, Efron went in several intertwined ways. Perhaps his most ambitious intellectual effort centered not on literature but on psychological theory and its sexual-social implications. Drawing on a studied rejection of our culture’s mind-body dualism, and the philosophical contextualism of John Dewey (and others such as Stephen Pepper), and wide-ranging through psychoanalytic literature and related biological and social reports, he concluded with a libertarian affirmation of bodily life. A resulting 330-plus page book, *The Sexual Body: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, was published a bit eccentrically (as a special double volume of *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* 6.1-2 [1985]). The book might be simply understood as an intellectual contribution to the continuing sexual revolution—a positive return to more, better, and self-determined sex, as against a culture which distortingly represses and exploits it.

Other ways of Efron’s ideological labors include more than three decades of editing and publishing an intermittent critical literary journal, *Paunch*, dedicated to presenting dissident academic studies. (I declare an interest here: I published several anticademic polemics in *Paunch*, taught briefly at Buffalo, and have been in off-and-on correspondence, a mixture of sympathy and contention, with Art Efron for three decades.)

Efron has also published in various non-mainstream places some variety of well-reasoned and learned critical essays on literature. One I find especially cogent and interesting is a monograph-length study: “War as the Health of the State: An Anarchist Reading of *Henry IV, Part One*,” published periodically (*Works and Days, Essays in the Socio-Historical Dimensions of Literature and the Arts* [Indiana University of Pennsylvania], spring 1992). That issue also engagingly includes a series of responses and rebuttals not only on how to read Shakespeare but on the debatable continuing relevance of anarchist ideology,
and Efron's balanced reply. Anarchism lives as idea and social-cultural responses.

A little sense of this continuing larger body of work seems to me necessary context for viewing the present Efron collection, again a book in periodical form. And that for several reasons. One is that we confront here not just an example but nearly a tradition of dissent. Academically—"professionally"—by publishing not in the most prestigious journals, but in varied interdisciplinary and off-beat ways. Intellectually by relentlessly pursuing, and yet developing, too, a radical view. And personally by carrying forth an often admirable commitment as issue-concerned teacher, colleague, and exemplar.

I also partly emphasize these roles and qualities first because I am unhappy with much in Art Efron's present rather ragged collection. No doubt part of my difficulty comes from skepticism about Reicheanism. Rereading Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), the dissident psychoanalyst and influential proponent of broad sexual revolution, and Efron on Reich, I am struck again by the similarities to reading in and on alchemy. (Granted, my sense of the parallelism came about fortuitously; while first reading Reich under the ardent tutoring of a social psychologist in the 1940s, I was also doing research in the sources of William Blake in Paracelsus and the like.) Alchemy and Reichean parallels include the mixture of science and magic. Both also claimed laboratory research for the universally transforming life substance—elixir and orgone. Both often fixated on apparatus with Reich, the Orgone Accumulator, a box in which you sat naked to increase sexual-body energy units, called orgones [from orgasm]. (Granted, I found the box more conducive to claustrophobia than tumescence.) The alchemical mind inflates a practical technique or therapy into a total cosmology, as with orgone energy determining all from touch to interstellar formations, and claims grandiose effects, such as transmuting metals and curing cancer. Perhaps most fundamental, this sensibility makes utter literalization of sweeping metaphors. Historically, for alchemists, Reich and the like, the metaphoric entities flee Occam's razor to become omnipresent yet obscure, trivial yet omnipotent.

Influential Reichean metaphors—and which Efron sometimes applies to the descriptive language of literary texts—include "armoring," an interesting therapeutic metaphor for psychosomatic rigidity from repression, which can be turned into "character armor" not only of a morally rigid individual but of the whole life-denying carapace of a false civilization, that is, feelingly repressed northern Euro-Americans. Another Reichean metaphor, countering "armoring," is "streaming." This seems to be the flow of felt (orgone) energy which relates one to a plant, a place, a person, even "stellar galaxies"—to the vibrant all of existence. It might best be understood, and certainly appears in literature, as a kind of religiousness; compare some of D. H. Lawrence (whose religiousness Efron partly convinced me I may have understated in my two books on his work). From a disinterested intellectual history perspective, Lawrence, Reich, and certain contemporary commentators, combine early twentieth-century psychotherapeutic mythology and a philosophy of vitalism with a powerful but usually underrated religion of animism.

Efron, in effect, repeatedly allows the religious point, as in ending forty-three pages of "Introduction: Approaching Reich Some Forty Years Later," discussing Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" lines about a sublime and joyous
"presence" that "rolls through all things." Dismissing the usual label of "pantheism" as too bland, the Reichean equates it with "life-energy" which positively animates all nature. The sensibility called for, then, goes beyond Efron's earlier emphasized commitment to "radical social change as an unavoidable necessity along with intimate personal change," to which threat he attributes the defensive resistance to Reicheanism, on to an implicit demand for conversion to a religiousized sensibility.

The earlier sections of the introduction armor the call with scattered lines of defense of Reich, who still provides therapeutic insights; possibly, but at least parts of his physical emphasis now appear in a wide variety of psychotherapeutic ritualisms. We are also informed, mostly in esoteric bibliography, that a number of Reicheans exist; so what? Ron Hubbard left far more Scientologyists. Efron also reluctantly grants "blind spots" in Reich: hysterical writing, late paranoid fantasies, and homophobia. But the gestures towards reasonableness do not suggest much rigor or persuasiveness to other than the already persuaded.

Efron also patches in a piece on a subject of historical interest, the influence of Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), with its emphasis on authoritarian families leading to orgasmic failure, sadomasochism, scapegoating, regression to childish obedience to leaders, and other aspects of sexual-energy distortion resulting in fascist character and movements. Briefly discussing an example of Reich's influence here, Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (English trans., two vols.: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 and 1989), Efron concludes that the Reicheanism appears but ambiguously and inadequately since non sexual causation receives much emphasis. Also noted: the issue of fascist character again arouses current dispute, as with the much discussed Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), but still fails to reckon sufficiently with the Reichean sexual body. The subject may deserve fuller, though I think less unilateral, development.

The last few pages of this lengthy patchwork introduction turns to literary works but mostly in the form of scholarly updating and a few later thoughts on novels discussed in the rest of the collection. It would be more coherent at least attached to, if not better integrated with, the specific novel essays. The doctrine could also use better integration. Indeed, it takes several essays before the reader receives an organized statement of Reichean concerns important for literature. One list of ten might be fairly condensed as critical admonitions to pay more attention in literature to the quality of adult sexual acts (or, from his practice in other essays, to implied sexual acts), to childhood development of all characters, and especially to evidence of psychosomatic “armoring” not only in character but in social relations (93-98). And, of course, the reader-critic should always be concerned with natural-primal flows of orgone energy which are the basis of everything. Corollary admonitions, such as reformulating mainstream "mechanistic" science to meet Reichean vitalistic demands, hardly by definition possible, also do not seem to relate much to literary works. Perhaps Efron's essentialist approach to human nature—including that "social life was once [pre-civilization] more natural and less armored”—does oppositionally relate to fashionable anti-essentialist (or "anti-foundationism" of Stanley Fish) literary theory.
But to cases, to close reading of a text, as we old-fashioned critics demand. The one textual example in Efron’s above Reichean decalogue comes as a paragraph from Ursula LeGuin’s libertarian utopian novel, *The Dispossessed* (1974). (Interest, again: I have discussed that novel in detail in my *Counterings: Utopian Dialectics in Contemporary Contexts* [1988].) The passage summarizes a multiple coition, after long absence, of the male protagonist and his female partner on a new society planet. Efron comments on part of the rhetoric of sexual feeling: “from a Reichean point of view it is not an orgasm at all. It is more like a mutual standoff.” The language does not accurately correspond, he says, to proper human coitus, though he grants that some of it “may be an oblique suggestion of a potential for the interweaving of two energy systems.” He seems to have peculiarly read some of the metaphors, for I can’t find much ancient “little death” of coital melancholy; “infinite pleasure” he takes literally; and rage in “rage of joy” seems misdefined as anger rather than ardor. He also ignores the way the passage relates to the characters and other scenes, such as the specifically contrasting bad sex with premature ejaculation with another, a representative American upper-middle-class woman. The reading may impose dubious Reichean strictures for good orgasms, narrowly good sex and true energy generally. As presented, what seems to be described as a good sexual experience gets a self-parodistically doctrinaire criticism.

Still, the focus on sexual quality may sometimes be a valid reading strategy. I suggest that Efron makes a somewhat better case in “The Pornographic Problem Once More: A Reichean Approach to *Story of O*.” Countering well-known interpretations (such as by Susan Griffin and Susan Sontag), he variously points up sexual contradictions in the sadomasochistic fantasies. He concludes that most essentially *Story of O* exploits the fantasy for “the adult body to become desexualized, devitalized,” yet claim an “identity” and heroism. It is, of course, a religious pattern, and Efron concludes that such pornography serves as a re-excited contemporary version of “the great all-time Western body fantasy” of contradictory gratification-punishment which we so desperately need to overcome. Come the fuller sexual revolution.

The largest of Efron’s literary commentaries here (87 pp.) turns about the “Reichean affinities” of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Curiously, he often dismisses much of the emphasis on magic realism rather than using it (including alchemy) to reenforce his insistence on the centrality of the animating magic of sexuality. Certainly he seems right that much of the tortuous history in the novel turns about sexuality, and its distortions. Efron’s discussion of many characters and scenes employs Reichean notions of “character armor,” “bodily memory,” childhood eroticism and development, and the like “life-energy patterns of feeling.” The appropriate reader responses should rest upon physicality, sexuality, not the symbolic or figural or abstract, or political. The largest moral demands that “a change in human culture must occur, in which LIFE ENERGY will be lived out rather than denied.”

Other contemporary literature only gets passing mention, mostly in the form of explicitly Reichean studies (often done under Efron’s aegis). Some influenced for a time by Reichenianism, such as Paul Goodman and Saul Bellow are cited (Isaac Rosenfeld and Norman Mailer, among others, could be added to the American list). Part of D. H. Lawrence gets mentioned as a strong can-
didate for the Reichean-compatible canon. Earlier, of course, comes Whitman and, obviously, Rabelais. (I suppose that other modern writers in that tradition of exuberant bodily emphasis, such as perhaps Jean Giono and Nikos Kazantzakis, as well as numerous current fictionists, might be appropriate candidates—not to delve into indeed several large realms of poetry.) At least taken in broader senses than the specifically Reichean, the sexually exalting traditions certainly represent an important, and often mis-represented, part of our Western literary legacy.

But Efron’s remaining concern here focuses rather on some Reichean re-readings of bits of the conventional Anglo-American literary canon. For Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* we get a discussion of a few passages of the protagonist’s inchoate bodily feelings and longings, “streamings” especially in terms of the natural scene. For the slightly more elaborate essay, “Wild Exhilaration through My Frame”: A Reichean Reading of Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance,* we are pointed to several passages of Coverdale’s inchoate bodily energy of longing. And, a bit more developed, “Reichean Criticism: The Human Body in *Wuthering Heights,*” takes some of the Brontë rhetoric of character description as sexually literal in terms of repression, armoring, self-therapy, and full-sexual need. The usual.

In the effort to “sensitize” our reading to body-energy patterns, Efron does not here, or elsewhere, claim to fully interpret the novels but simply to make us more sexually responsive to the characters as biological entities. It literal-mindedly ignores most discrepancies between literary rhetoric and physical realities. Efron’s forays into Reichean criticism of stock texts, then, often make in practice relatively modest critical claims. Still, the countering purposes may serve some provocative suggestiveness. Neo-alchemy lives. So, more importantly, does an oppositional and liberatory critical impetus.

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