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Beyond Poststructuralism: The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Reading edited by Wendell V. Harris. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996. Pp. 416. \$60.00, cloth; \$19.95, paper.

In one of the founding texts of modern Anglo-American literary criticism, I. A. Richards began a systematic defense of literary communication and literary value with a sustained polemic against the "phantoms" of then-contemporary critical practice and literary theory. The first three chapters of Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1925) attacked in turn "The Chaos of Critical Theories," "The Phantom Aesthetic State," and "The Language of Criticism." Richards saw the need to recover and to reform the value of reading literature in the 1920s and pitched his theoretical formulation and defense of literary criticism as a route *beyond* philology's and historicism's abject avoidance of literary experience and its social value ("The Chaos of Critical Theories"). He also contended that "modern aesthetics" and its neo-Kantian reification of "a peculiar aesthetic attitude" ("The Phantom Aesthetic State") and its fascination with "verbal thickets" of technical terms ("The Language of Criticism") occluded important critical recognitions of the holistic effects and communicative values that are to be had in the experience of reading literary works.

The nineteen essays collected in Wendell Harris's *Beyond Structuralism: The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Reading* largely read as though Richards's critical project and polemics are being played out once again, but now in relation to a later generation of philologists, historicists, ideological phantoms, and verbal technocrats. The anthology is divided into two parts—"The Disabling Confusions of Current Literary Theory" and "Recapturing the Values of Reading Literature"—that broadly echo both the type of polemical target and the form of good critical practice that Richards so forcefully limned in 1925. The editor's own words of introduction strongly underscore the point of the division, though not the pretext, to be found in Richards:

The [eight] essays making up the first section of this volume have therefore been chosen for their aid in straightening out misconceptions and confusions that, although rarely defended explicitly nowadays, continue to insinuate themselves even though they often undercut the arguments in which they are found.

The primary purpose of the second section of this collection is to suggest ways of regarding literature that emphasize its values in widening the sympathies and perspectives of readers. (xii)

It's the second part of the book—the section in which the more interesting and all the previously unpublished work (four essays) are to be found—that proves to be the real test of the editor's desire to move critical practice "beyond poststructuralism." However, it may be useful to provide a taste of the polemics brought to bear upon contemporary "confusions" in literary theory before attending to "the values of reading literature" that would lie "beyond poststructuralism" or beyond "The Chaos of Critical Theories" as an I. A. Richards might have phrased it.

The opening chapter reprints three segments of Bernard Bergonzi's essay "Splendours and Miseries of the Academy" from *Exploring English* (1990) and sets a dual tone of complaint and nostalgia regarding the decline of "those long-vanished ideals of the 1950s" best exemplified by scholars such as Richards, F. R. Leavis, and Donald Davie and critics such as Edmund Wilson and Cyril Connolly (13 and 7-14 in passing). Critical practice and critical power have declined, and Bergonzi finds as evidence of this academic decadence and cultural decay the fateful fall of the once influential "man of letters": "Forty years ago, when criticism still occupied a traditional place as part of public discourse, the first books of a distinguished generation of British critics—Bayley, Davie, Hoggart, Kermode, Wain, Williams—were reviewed in the daily and weekly press" (20). Yes, times have changed. However, to blame a more recent generation of scholars and critics who are expected, from before the day they are hired for a full-time position, to be as productive and publicly circulated as the elite few of an older generation ("Bayley, Davie, Hoggart, Kermode, Wain, Williams") seems at best curmudgeonly and more accurately wrong-footed. The difficulties of the academy are not to be laid at the door of poststructuralist theory—a mode and a generation of theorizing no more and no less confusing than Germanic philology, textual studies, old historicism, new criticism, structuralism, myth-criticism, and so on, in their own days. The "miseries of the academy" are due to at least three other and far more systemic factors: a) inevitable changes, challenges and developments within disciplinary fields; b) financial and institutional choices that have disfavored traditional "arts and sciences" backgrounds in favor of technical and managerial career-training; and c) the redefinition and devaluation of university teaching and critical skills in the wake of mass higher education, funding cuts, and the quantification of research and "research results."

In their contributions to the first part of *Beyond Poststructuralism* John Holway and Wendell Harris are correct yet again in pointing out that many poststructuralist theorists get Saussure wrong (23-58). Yet Harris accomplished this task brilliantly in 1983 in an essay in *JAAC* and, ironically enough, Fredric Jameson—the arch-poststructuralist for many—surveyed similar misrecognitions of Saussurean linguistics in *The Prison House of Language* in 1972. In a set of reprinted essays, moreover, A. D. Nuttall, Raymond Tallis, John Searle, and Richard Levin box a now overly familiar set of deconstructive and cultural materialist "phantoms" and "confusions"—namely, Derrida, Harold Bloom, Frank Lentricchia, Catherine Belsey and company.

Of the opening eight essays only Robert Scholes's "An End to Hypocriticism" (1991) tries to move beyond complaint and blame and acknowledge some of the "hypocritical" practices of "[t]hose of us who engage in traditional literary criticism at the present time" (164). Scholes notes a significant, hypocritical discrepancy between those literary professors who espouse high Arnoldian values of reading and teaching great works and the nature of contemporary cultural practices (161-67). His proposal is to rupture the familiar litany of period-and-author courses, with their "canon of sacred texts," and replace them with "a modern revision of the medieval Trivium" (168). Indeed he proposes a modern quadrivium of courses that would place the

reading and discussion of literary texts within a matrix of themes and problems that seek to recover the relational, interactive and "classic" qualities of literary reading: 1) "Language and Human Subjectivity"; 2) "Representation and Objectivity"; 3) "System and Dialectic"; and 4) "Persuasion and Mediation" (168-72). Thus sociolinguistics, social science, philosophy, and rhetoric are projected as an appropriate, composite theoretical and pedagogical matrix in which to engage the experience of reading literature. It's an intriguing proposal, one that resonates with classical Greek and Greco-Roman conceptions of the functions and values of reading literature, yet one that operates beyond modern, Arnoldian, and Leavisite notions of literary canonicity and value, though not necessarily "beyond poststructuralism."

Indeed one of the most interesting of the eleven essays included in the second part of *Beyond Poststructuralism*, a reprint of Christopher Clausen's 1994 *NLH* article on "'National Literatures' in English: Toward a New Paradigm," echoes Robert Scholes's criticism of traditional (and flawed) literary teaching from and toward a privileged canon of texts. Clausen maintains that a still strongly ingrained "concept of 'national literatures' in English has outlived its usefulness and should be abandoned, both as a way of thinking about literary history and as a way of organizing curricula" (301-2). It's not merely that the study of Anglophone literature is so mixed, hybrid, and international, but that the concept of a national canon has always played into the hands of parochial nationalisms and the political agendas of cultural nationalists. Clausen quite rightly asserts: "the nationalisms that gave rise successively to the concept of a distinctly British literature, then an American literature, and now Australian, Canadian, and a host of what are now often described equivocally as 'new literatures,' constitute a barrier to clear thinking about what has long since become an international enterprise carried on in many cultural settings" (302). Such a formulation does not impugn or deny the force of the local and the regional and of cultural differences. However, it does question the antiquated, culturally nationalist identification of "national character" with the qualities and status of literary production.

The hotly contested reception of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (1991) in Ireland, north and south, and in Britain demonstrates that the troubled terrain of "identity politics," political affiliations, and cultural polemics are far more at issue in such a massive attempt at the formation of a national literature of Ireland than anything so tame as "the experience of reading" Irish Anglophone literature. Indeed, were a "literary scholar" today to propose the writing of a history of Irish literature, 1800 to 1990, it would rightly provoke immediate scrutiny of the political motives of both author and press because it would be interpreted as a polemical intervention in a "debate" about identity politics and cultural nationalism. Christopher Clausen's well argued case regarding the past history and present inadequacy of the concept of "national literatures" in English may find a few adherents in North America and Britain, and far fewer in Ireland for instance, but its day will come.

Clausen sets a literary, cultural and pedagogical agenda as profoundly useful as the curricular one set by Robert Scholes:

A course that reflected this discovery [of the "impossible" task of "'covering' the twentieth-century British novel"] might enlarge the understanding of both teacher and students by finally allowing James Joyce and William Faulkner the curricular proximity that their writings demand; putting Toni Morrison in touch with Chinua Achebe; rescuing Patrick White, V. S. Naipaul, Robertson Davies, and Raja Rao from their long incarceration on the margins of a dead empire. Similarly, those of us whose field is nineteenth-century poetry might learn more and teach better if Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti were finally allowed to shed light on each other, along with Tennyson and Whitman and (perhaps) the latter's Australian disciple Bernard O'Dowd. The choices, permutations, and new perspectives opened up by this way of conceiving such a course would be nearly inexhaustible. Nothing would be lost except the illusion that by concentrating on a single nation, one can master a discrete quantum of literary tradition. (313)

It's up to literary scholars and teachers to work beyond parochial interests and cultural polemics to explore the local, hybrid, intercultural, and international sites from which Anglophone writers engage one another and their multiethnic and multicultural readerships. Such a pedagogical task, and its concomitant mode of literary understanding, would lie "beyond poststructuralism" only in the sense that it would be the fruit of culturally and intertextually responsive forms of poststructuralist theory.

Various other essays reprinted in the second half of Harris's collection tend to emphasize the interpretation of literary author and literary work in historical context. Reprinted essays by James Battersby, David Bromwich, and Quentin Kraft return to and reformulate historicist and intentionalist positions rather typical of erudite compromises between the old historicism and the New Criticism of the 1950s. Martha Nussbaum's 1991 essay "The Literary Imagination in Public Life" works theoretically much the same as Battersby's, Bromwich's, and Kraft's, yet it strives to place its recovery of Dickensian narrative form and intention not so much within its own place and time as the public life of current post-Chicago School/Reaganite/Thatcherite political economies (see especially 426-29). Gayle Greene, however, stands as a lone voice espousing the sort of critical "personalism" that attained some currency and vogue in the 1980s following Adrienne Rich's call (326). Greene's "Looking at History" (1993) examines her involvement first with Shakespeare and then with feminism, especially the historical itinerary of her culturally and socially engendered "I" (317-44).

For this reader and reviewer, the real energy of the second half of the collection is to be found in three of its new essays (by Michael Fischer, Charles Altieri, and Andre Lefevere) and its penultimate reprint (by Virgil Nemoianu). All four authors echo positions each manifests elsewhere, but it's with this selection of writings that one can detect modes of inquiry and critical intelligence genuinely attempting to move literary studies "beyond poststructuralism" and toward articulating the holistic effects and communicative

values that are to be had in the experience of reading literary works. In other words, toward the goal I. A. Richards set himself seventy years earlier.

In "Deconstruction and the Redemption of Difference" Michael Fischer sketches a self-resistant and self-critical function within deconstructive readings of difference that he would pose as a significant supplement to the otherwise diffident and endlessly deferring ethos of deconstruction (259-76). Deconstructive readings of difference need not project the "often evasive responses" associated with Derrida or with Geoffrey Hartman's response to Paul de Man's wartime writings (269-70), but could project modes of understanding the binary oppositions and rigid dualisms that "identity politics" and "the new cultural politics of difference" depend so strongly upon (260). For instance, Barbara Foley's opposition of deconstruction and Marxism and of "coalition politics" and "class war" and Joyce Joyce's comparable opposition of deconstruction and African-American identity politics need resistant rejoinders; so-called activist criticism needs a check on its centralizing and over-simplifying tendencies (261-63, 268-69). Fischer maintains that literature and deconstructive reading of literature become "valuable exactly when they irritate the ideologue hot for certainties and quick answers" (274). Fischer's critical move beyond poststructuralism, if it may be recognized as such, is to perceive the pragmatic and cultural purposiveness of self-resistance, self-questioning, and irony in the service of an informed cultural politics.

Indeed Fischer's essay is the first in the collection to begin tracing vague features of a new ideological ground for critical activity "beyond poststructuralism." For instance, any avoidance of poststructuralist practices of reading literature and literature's culturally rich and ambiguous enactments of personal and social identities is itself problematic for Fischer: "Avoiding deconstruction, however, would keep identity politics vulnerable to dogmatism: to deterministic, stereotypical ideas of race and gender that deny individual differences and the multiple identities struggling for acknowledgment in each of us" (273). Here is the intimation of a renewed, liberal, and post-dogmatic "identity politics" that would strive to recognize, encourage, and fulfill "individual differences" and non-authoritarian "identities" in the aftermath of a poststructuralist critique of "difference." Programmatic and deterministic articulation of social, cultural, racial, and gender differences—usually and stereotypically in the form of binary oppositions—yields dogmatism, however current and correct it might seem to be. "Difference" becomes "redeemed" once, when and whenever we can read against the grain of our dogmatisms and trust our self-critical and self-doubting powers to see us beyond the constraints of contemporary structures of social and cultural identity.

This liberal, post-dogmatic identity politics, so to speak, finds another spokesperson in Charles Altieri whose essay, "The Purloined Profession: or, How to Reidealize Reading for the Text" (279-99), follows Fischer's in Harris's collection. Altieri also contests the scripted subjectivities and cultural reading practices of contemporary identity politics and champions instead a recuperation of selected features of "aesthetic humanism"—a position that he has staked out at some length in *Act and Quality* (1981), *Canons and Consequences* (1990), and *Subjective Agency: Towards an Expressivist Ethics* (1994). Altieri's humanistic emphases on expressivism, agency, performance, and the

sorts of aesthetic identifications that become available through the reading of literature chart an intelligent and unpolemical articulation of the nature of literary speech acts:

Aesthetic humanism on the other hand, holds out the possibility that in our encounters with the arts we foster powers for trying out identifications with agents in various social and psychological situations, for exploring possible attitudes individuals might cultivate, for gaining better understanding of how other people live, and above all for experimenting with idealized versions of selves and social relations that clarify the positions from which we criticize and that have the capacity to show what we can build because of those criticisms. (282)

Moreover, Altieri's position contests both current critical orthodoxy regarding the constructions of identity politics as well as poststructuralist practices of reading. He reads closely the literary textures of one of Adrienne Rich's lyric performances and of Poe's "Purloined Letter" in order to display their expressivist qualities and the limitations of a political reading of Rich and a poststructural reading of Poe (288-98). These readings need to be encountered in their rich particularity; they are typically exuberant and incisive performances by one of the finest contemporary Anglophone readers of literary expression.

Andre Lefevere's essay "On Daring to Teach Literature. Again" bristles with proposals for the reinvigoration of poetics and genre study and for the teaching of historical poetics as the basis of literary competence (350-59). Lefevere also displays an annoying dependence on neologistic tags such as "theocrit" and "postmodstru" that tend to underplay the tone of his otherwise highly accessible and sensible essay (see especially 346-48). Lefevere's proposals, however, operate beyond structuralism and its ahistorical and schematic constructions of genre theory and poetics. Following Bakhtin, Jauss, and Siegfried Schmidt, Lefevere essentially professes a poststructuralist mode of study and teaching that attempts to understand both the literariness and the historical specificity of literary communication and the generic and discursive choices displayed therein.

In one of the two reprinted essays that conclude *Beyond Poststructuralism*, Virgil Nemoianu concisely strikes a balance between the post-dogmatic values of reading literature espoused by Fischer and Altieri and the alternative and highly pragmatic form of poststructuralist study of literariness and literary history for which Lefevere would speak. In "Literary History: Some Roads Not (Yet) Taken," an article first published in *MLQ* in 1993, Nemoianu objects that "the left-Nietzscheanism currently hegemonic in the literature departments of North America with its postulate that adversarial power is the center of human beings and relationships" has, among other matters, occluded at least six "alternatives" to understanding and communicating contemporary literary history and value (388). Dimensions of poststructuralism other than an insistence upon language, power, social construction, difference, and identity politics are at play. For instance, Nemoianu

imagines a contemporary reading of "the history of mankind as a narrative of epistemological accumulation, expansion, and growth":

a literary history (one at least!) that would treat literature as the effort to package and transmit cognitive materials would be quite exciting. Umberto Eco has argued eloquently that it was the function of literature to cultivate abilities such as perceptual alertness, rapid induction, construction of hypotheses, positing of possible worlds, moral sophistication, linguistic proficiency, and value awareness. Personally I would go a little farther and argue that the actual transmission of information (learning) in palatable forms would also be part of such a putative history. (390)

Such a proposal promotes the cognitive dimensions of literature alongside the coercive dimensions all too often overlaid in the rhetoric of extreme poststructuralist theorists. It invites us to recognize the blooming and highly popular genres of critical fiction, science fiction, and the hybridizing interactions of literature and science. About the latter development Nemoianu quite rightly detects "a certain joyous agreement with the world and an exuberant, sassy, usage of its surplus of meanings" (391). Such an assessment puts a whole new spin on that problematic poststructuralist chestnut of the overdetermination and undecidability of signification. Moreover, five additional, contrary and pragmatic rereadings and revaluings of poststructuralist the-matics are on offer by Nemoianu (388-93).

Beyond Poststructuralism doesn't fulfill the enormous promise of its title. However, it does provide a wide and varied range of essays that exhibit critical and cultural polemics concerning literary theory in the 1980s and 1990s and some attempts to rethink and revalue the ways of reading literature that poststructuralism itself has opened up for the literary academy. In that regard Wendell Harris's collection is far more useful than the more recent and rather ill-tempered gathering of attacks on theory and poststructuralism edited by Philip Davis and grandly called *Real Voices on Reading* (London: Macmillan, 1997). Moreover, there are much more than the critical traditions and argumentative styles of Richards and Leavis and the like to fall back upon. It's unfortunate that *Beyond Poststructuralism* completely ignores the work on literary theory and the experience of reading by John Dewey, Stephen Pepper, and Louise Rosenblatt—three contemporaries of and alternatives to Richards and Leavis who all offer viable routes through and beyond poststructuralism. Dewey, Pepper and Rosenblatt provide crucial early efforts to understand the cognitive and pragmatic dimensions and values of real readers reading literature; they articulate cultural and affective dimensions of authorial projects not embraced by historicisms and formalisms. None of the three is cited anywhere in the essays, notes, or bibliography of *Beyond Poststructuralism*.

Beyond Poststructuralism does provide useful bibliographies of "relevant publications" by each of its nineteen authors after each essay. Readers of collections often pick and choose specific essays based upon titles, topics, and

authors' reputations; and this editorial strategy is a convenient and welcome way to locate additional writings for further study. The annotated "select bibliography" (435-37) at the end of the collection is too selective, however. It omits any mention of recent work by younger scholars such as Don Bialostosky, Kate Flint, Steven Mailloux, Victor Nell, James Phelan, Margery Sabin and others on the problems of poststructuralism and refigurations of the terms and values of literary reading.

Queen's University of Belfast

Brian G. Caraher

Sacrificing Commentary: Reading the End of Literature by Sandor Goodhart. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Pp. xiv + 362. \$45.00.

Something of both the noble ambition and the challenge of this book may be represented by its title. Like Derrida's *Donner la Mort*, especially in the peculiarly translated *Gift of Death*, Goodhart's *Sacrificing Commentary* forces together two words in ambiguous grammatical and denotative relationship. Just as Derrida wishes to evoke the dizzying uncertainty about whether death is a given or something one gives—Abraham gives, or offers to give, in sacrifice—so Goodhart wishes to establish a deconstructionist free play between an ethical act (the act of sacrificing commentary to some higher purpose) and a neutral one (to borrow his awkward locution, an "anti-ethical" act): commentary about sacrifice. It is not actually Derrida but Paul de Man who haunts this book as the specter of "anti-ethical" criticism, in spiritual warfare with Goodhart's other giant, René Girard, champion of ethical concern, or what Goodhart might sum up in the phrase the ethics of "anti-sacrificial" thinking. But there is, despite the spiritual warfare of these giants in the book, and the book's vision of twentieth-century literary criticism generally as a battle between a fundamentally ethical and a fundamentally anti-ethical position, a certain primacy to the free play of differences: the one thing that may matter more to Goodhart than the actual terms of the spiritual battle in which he is so partisan is the deconstructionist's preference for a quibble. Even when treading the mined turf of Holocaust testimony, Goodhart cannot resist bearing / baring witness, or the trauma of a history / the history of a trauma, or witnessing the impossible / the impossibility of witnessing. What must be said first about this book is that it repeatedly, naggingly raises the fundamental question of whether criticism is about words or about ideas—or whether it is significant or playfully professional (professionally playful?) to think in terms of how much can be turned up in a turn of phrase.

Beyond that impulse to baffle rather than to denote, the title *Sacrificing Commentary* turns out to mean "commentary about the activity of sacrificing or the impulse to sacrifice"—in several different senses, all but one of which

seem to be intended. First, this is not simply a book of literary criticism but a book that broods about what criticism "does" to literature, and whether it does that out of respect or out of antagonism. What criticism "does" is to sacralize literature, by which Goodhart intends something more dramatic than canon formation or elevation of the literary text on a pedestal. He intends "sacrifice" to have some of the connotation of the Hebrew *korban*—something brought close to God. He therefore would have us think not of the purely aesthetic pedestal but of the ritual altar, on which the literary work is raised and offered by the literary critic as priest. In this sense of "sacrifice," Goodhart does not always mean for us to think of the literary text as something criticism "kills"; but as his book draws to a close, he emphasizes the sacrificial act as an act of violence against the object rendered sacred. Two of his similes suggest that this aggression is a mechanism of defense against the power of literature. He compares criticism's defense against literature to the healthy organism's antibodies warding off infection. Literature is threatening, and literature is "alien." To defend against literature, "the ruling cultural organism" (the university? literary culture at large?) sends out criticism "to surround, enclose, and effectively neutralize an intruding foreign body that has entered the system" (254).

A second simile depends on the hyperbole of literature as not just alien but monstrous. The function of criticism, then,

is something like the capture of King Kong who is placed on display at the margins of the kingdom for all to observe (where he threatens always to break loose and wreak havoc on the city), and who in the final sequence, once he has escaped from those margins and is cornered atop the empire state building, is knocked from it, and in some sense becomes that building. The edifice remains as his monument, the trace of his passing, so to speak. (254)

It is not clear whether Goodhart envisions the collectivity of literature as such a Blatant Beast, whether he is speaking of only the giants of the literary canon, or whether he imagines that each work of literature, including every sonnet, every haiku, is such a King Kong "literaturized" (his monstrous term) or monumentalized into an item in a souvenir shop of Empire State buildings of various sizes. Most readers, especially most teachers of literature, would more frequently worry about the literary work having no sign of life at all. I can recall many a freshman seminar when the poem about which I felt so passionately seemed to my students more like a hand-sized rubber toy King Kong than a live, raging ape. Whatever else might be said of this book, it is a rare and exhilarating experience to encounter someone so moved by the ethical questions literature raises that he needs to envision literary criticism as a mechanism of defense against feeling and questioning too much.

"Sacralizing" is only part of "sacrificing." Following Girard, Goodhart is also interested in the anthropology of sacrificial rituals and the questionable privileging of them as outlets for interpersonal violence. But for Goodhart,

the major advance in civilization is not the turn from overt violence to symbolic violence, nor the turn from violence against many to violence against the few. To reduce this complex idealism to a problematic formula, one might say that for Goodhart a holocaust is a holocaust, a miserable affair either way whether a few bulls or six million Jews are slaughtered. Goodhart's Judaism is decidedly a Reform Judaism: Its major event is the substitution of liturgical words for all sacrificial ritual. Goodhart's Christianity, if that is not an oxymoron, similarly privileges the dismissal of sacrificial substitutions. The meaning of Christ crucified is the same as the post-holocaust cry, "Never Again!" Thus behind Goodhart's literary criticism is a criticism of religion. Jewish privileging of the ram substituted for Isaac is at fault because Goodhart takes the ram's side: As long as we are willing to substitute ram for child—rather than dismiss the whole system of substitution—the kingdom of peace cannot be at hand. Christian privileging of Christ crucified is similarly at fault for worshiping rather than deploring the ghastly victimization of its messiah. His position has something in common with the Talmudic idea that a world that needs to be redeemed by the death of one is not worth the redeeming.

Goodhart believes that the impulse to sacrifice animals is simply a substitution for the impulse to sacrifice certain individuals (one's firstborn, for example)—and this, in turn, is but a mechanism of substitution for a general violence: Yahweh's impulse to destroy all the Israelites, or Apollo's anger against all of Thebes, these myths being in turn symbolic substitutions—projections—of general, human violence. It is impossible to imagine what kind of practical morality would result from an attempt to resist all substitutions for aggressive instincts. If Goodhart held consistently to his position that all substitutions are sacrificial, the wearing of a cross would be as culpable as nailing through flesh, and tacking up scriptural text on one's doorpost would be tantamount to slaying the firstborn who dwell inside. Nor would religious substitutions alone be condemned. All sports, for example, would warrant our condemnation as sacrificial substitutions for aggressive behavior, there being no difference between football and unadulterated bashing of brains. There could likewise be no literature, for all acts of expression of aggressive instincts would be damnable substitutions for the thing itself. Goodhart's defense against this *reductio ad absurdum* is the invention of a second category, the "anti-sacrificial," which privileges certain symbolic substitutions for the way they undermine their originals. I am not sure if he would call baseball "anti-sacrificial" while bashing people over the head with a bat remains "sacrificial," or whether some finer distinction between team sports and, say, boxing, recapitulates what he sees as the distinction in the history of religion between sacrificial and anti-sacrificial rites. In the discussion of literature, however, Goodhart toys with the idea of condemning substitutive mechanisms such as tragic catharsis for participating in sacrificial violence—only to redeem tragedy, at least great tragedy and select portions of the Hebrew Bible and Shakespearean canon, for being "anti-sacrificial." One of the most profound and tortured questions raised by this book is just how we decide when a work of literature "represents" violence in the sense of holding a mirror up to nature and condemning its nature, and when it "represents" in the sense of being a part of the violence it encodes. Is the blinding of Gloucester

ter in Lear an "anti-sacrificial" act? Is reading or watching that terrible scene an anti-sacrificial ritual? Could the same be said for tolerating, as cinema spectator, the high level of infliction of pain routinely represented with graphic realism on the screen?

Goodhart's answer appears to be that a great work of literature is "critical of the myth" (27) that it represents. Through verbal ambiguity, and most especially through ironic doublings of action, a great work of literature undermines the sacrificial substitution it takes as theme. His best example, I believe, is his discussion of the story of Joseph, a narrative so filled with doublings and redoublings that "substitution itself is on display" (116). But what makes this story a "demystification of sacrificial thinking" (107) rather than a complex reiteration of sacrificial substitutions, is the way the doublings suggest undoings. One might be tempted, for example, to think of young Joseph's dreams of supremacy and their fulfillment when his brothers go down to Egypt and bow and beg as a myth supportive of sacrificial activity: As Joseph himself tells them, it was all for the best, and their victimization of the young dreamer eventually led to their salvation from hunger at the hands of the victim resurrected as Egypt's second in command. But for Goodhart, the identification of victim and master is shorthand for the critique or "demystification" (119) of sacrificial violence. Joseph's staging of the imprisonment of Simeon is part of his pedagogical assault on his brothers' sacrificial behavior. If this much is simple moralization (let us call it, modeling the term on Goodhart's own awkwardness, the moral of "anti-violence"), Goodhart offers something far more sophisticated when he interprets Joseph's self-elevation as a repetition and undoing of Jacob's privileging of Joseph. This we might call "the moral of anti-chosenness." The first moral condemns sacrifice as aggressive behavior towards its victim; the second condemns sacrifice for "sacralizing," or choosing one chosen son, one chosen people, above others. Though a reader may feel uncomfortable about these moral lessons being ascribed to the text itself, rather than the commentator's midrash on the text, Goodhart's position is that the very ambiguity of the text, the way it allows one to draw competing lessons privileging or condemning sacrifice, privileging or condemning chosenness, is the essence of the moral force of the text itself. Great literature, by pointing in opposite directions, "sacrifices" clarity or unidirectionality for the higher wisdom, the "anti-sacrificial" wisdom, of its uncertainties.

Goodhart himself, however, is writing criticism and not great literature, and so one of the meanings of "sacrificing commentary" is commentary that, by definition (generally) or by particularly aggressive effort (in the case of this book) "sacrifices" literature: Critics elevate the texts they discuss; but they elevate them on altars, not just pedestals, and "kill" the texts' ambiguities. One might say of the essays on the Hebrew Bible in this book that they repeatedly reduce all narratives and all ethical and ritual commandments to what Goodhart calls "the law of anti-idolatry." In the book of Job, for example, Job makes a fetish of justice, and God intervenes to remind Job that "creation is larger than justice" (201)—a notion that Goodhart does not seem to believe would qualify as an alternate idolatry. The Ten Commandments Goodhart reduces to the same "anti-idolatry," with the sabbath, for example, codifying a kind of Nancy Reagan "Just say no!" The sabbath teaches us

regularly, ritually, to just say no to our worldly pursuits, "to stop, to rest, to punctuate the week with the Sabbath, . . . to partake with God or the radically Other, in the creation of the universe in an ongoing and sustaining fashion" (201). If this sounds a little too much like the cant of the Reform rabbinat, one has to grant Goodhart the integrity of sacrificing all—his tone, his status as literary critic, and perhaps the richness of the text he reduces to ashes—for these repeated pieties.

The one meaning of "sacrifice" that may lie beyond authorial intention concerns Goodhart's own sacrifice of his fine powers of commentary to his preoccupation with sacrifice. The lead essay, on Sophocles' *Oedipus*, focuses excitingly on the question of whether Laius was murdered by many or by one—a question Oedipus is busy pursuing until further revelations overtake him and the question is dropped. In Goodhart's reading, Oedipus understands that Laius was murdered by many and that he himself cannot be a parricide; but Thebes is in trouble, and Oedipus decides to sacrifice himself and accept victimization for the good of his countrymen. *Oedipus Rex as A Tale of Two Cities!* I think this is just plain wrong—and not because there is something morally culpable in self-sacrifice, but because Sophocles' text simply does not warrant such misreading. One can claim (as in *Never on Sunday*) that Medea does not kill her children; she just goes off to the seashore with them for a holiday. But the sacrificial reading of Sophocles and the anti-sacrificial reading of Euripides are equally guilty of sacrificing commentary for independent fantasy.

Similarly, Goodhart writes very well of Jonah, the one prophet of the Hebrew Bible who comically seems to have a Greek sense of prophecy and to forget that before every prediction ("you're going to fall!") there is an implied, pedagogical "if" ("if you don't listen to your mother, child" or "if you don't mend your ways, Nineveh!"). What distinguishes Goodhart's essay is his fine focus on the word *chus*, "take pity on," whether the object be a broad-leaf plant or an entire city. God addresses Jonah as Hopkins addresses Margaret in "Spring and Fall": "Leaves, like the things of man, you / With your fresh thoughts care for can you?" Jonah's pity for the *kikayon*, like Margaret's for the leaves of Goldengrove, captures human feeling as it must be caught to move us—in the particular, "a tree of many one" in Wordsworth's Great Ode, or a little girl's red coat in *Schindler's List*. Yet strangely, Goodhart's emphasis on sacrifice leads him to what I believe is just the wrong point: "'Leave the pitying to Me,' He tells this reluctant prophet. 'Don't take over My position. . . . Let Me decide who is worthy of pity and who is not'" (158). Goodhart actually seems to believe that this is the moral of the tale—which is a bit like taking seriously Garrison Keillor's wisecrack about Catholics: they think forgiveness is divine—and so they don't practice it personally. What distinguishes Goodhart's reading is the way the most complex questions of the prophet's psychology are cathected about that little, almost nameless act of kindness and of love; but introducing the *kikayon* plant as sacrificial substitute, and condemning care for Nineveh as "a form of idolatry" (154) are sorry by-products of the focus on the sacrificial.

In praising this book of literary theory for what it accomplishes *despite* its theory, I do not mean to hoist Goodhart on his own petard. But I do mean to point to the humanity, the respect for literature, that allows Goodhart repeat-

edly to show us literature besting criticism. If "great literature is already 'about' the criticism that will come along and attempt to displace it" (250), we must admire a critic willing to step aside and show us how much great literature knows.

Yale University

Leslie Brisman

Shakespeare among the Moderns by Richard Halpern. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997. Pp. 304. \$45.00.

This remarkably deft book recovers respect for the modernism of its scrutiny, by way of what Halpern presents as modernism's "dialectical interplay between past and present" (14), a mode the author himself replicates. The implicit mode of modernism, elevated to the status of "theory," is "historical allegory" in which a mapping of present onto past is done with full awareness of historical difference. Such a meliorating critical move by Halpern refines and saves modernism by its common link to contemporary theory's self-awareness and complexity.

From the initial theoretical introduction "on historical allegory," Halpern proceeds through several intriguing and well-informed studies: on modernism's incorporation of ethnology and its effect on the construction of a "primitive Shakespeare" ("Shakespeare in the Tropics," highlighted by the book's cover photo of Orson Welles's 1936 "Voodoo Macbeth"); on Shakespeare's relation to mass culture and especially to its manipulation ("That Shakespeareian Mob"); on Northrup Frye as the central figure in moving criticism toward the social ("Modernist in the Middle"); on the abstract nature of the money form and its relation to the question of the antisemitism and anti-antisemitism of *The Merchant of Venice* ("The Jewish Question"); and finally, on the most extreme allegorization of Shakespeare and his characters as industrial machines ("Hamletmachines"). These few big chapters are all worth their size.

Shakespeareans, described as the main audience of the work, may be somewhat more pleased than theorists in general, since the debates as framed here are less involved than they might be with contemporary debates in theory about the postmodern. Not quite a "new wine in old bottles approach," Halpern's essay wants to argue, however, that there is less of a break than sometimes thought; modernism continues, in fact, because of its prestige in universities (an apt socioliterary observation), because of its "intrinsic intellectual power" (perhaps a little less convincing, especially given the next reason for continuity), and because of the response of modernism to "continuing conditions" (2). The latter, although some references to political conditions and wars are included, usually remain at a rather high level of generality—this is smooth and thin rather than bumpy and thick Foucauldian history. While Halpern speaks of his double focus on "historical allegory" and monopolistic-phase capitalist economics, the latter seems more intermittent and unessential to the overall work, however astutely it will be used in two of the chapters in particular. Early on he draws upon Benjamin's striking almost

metaphysical linkage of allegorization with commodification: commodity is in effect "practical allegory . . . [devaluing] its own thingly existence . . . in order to signify an invisible realm of values" (12) to invoke the risks of devaluation of the past. Occasionally, however, the writing tends to take on the feel of an intellectual exercise rather than the insurrectional feel grounding Benjamin's speculations. Halpern's respect for modernism's intellectual power is careful to avoid any suggestion of strong allegiance, but one is left wondering somewhat about what the allegiances here might be. We occasionally get a resulting blank irony, as in Halpern's throwaway comment about his having sometimes "supplied postmodern trimmings" (11). The investment in harmonizing produces the occasional slip, such as when T. S. is discussed as not having a notion of "timeless" literary classics (5), whereas "timelessness" (combined with temporality) is the very term Eliot himself was earlier quoted as using.

The fascinating first chapter on the differing ways of appropriating a "primitive" Shakespeare for Matthew Arnold, Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and others, is a wonderful corrective to a common perception of Shakespeare's becoming our archetypal "highbrow" author. Thus, the links to imperialism are complex rather than simple ones pegging Shakespeare as hegemonic apologist. Halpern thus provides a nuanced, neat genealogy to New Historicist interest in imperialism and cultural appropriation. The second chapter, on mass culture, argues a reading of modernism along the lines of Negt and Kluge, namely, that the modernist Shakespeare helps to create a "bourgeois public sphere" (78). Here Halpern uses modern interest in "crowd psychology" as a counter to the popular-festive arguments of "Bakhtinian certainties." While the corrective to Bakhtin is helpful and probably necessary, it would appear that in the meantime what has dropped out from the progressive implications here is a realm of hopefulness. The masses are manipulatable although (in a curious and throwaway concession) within limits that they themselves set (89).

The chapter on Frye, who is said to anticipate to some extent countercultural movements of the sixties, suggests that despite Frye's "hostility to contextualization" (153), his criticism works in an intellectually valuable way: to separate literature from belief and to return it to social form as a "defensive totality" on guard against the external. In an important section, Halpern reads brothel scenes of *Pericles* for their mix of market and virtue, identifying in Shakespeare a Lukacsian unease about the impending disaster which is the market. Here, historical allegory, Shakespeare's characters, and modernist critic of the romance form continually shift places productively and swiftly.

The next, brilliant chapter on *Merchant*, virtually impossible to summarize in its density, continues and develops an economic "focus." It begins with the questions raised about Shakespeare's own possible Jewishness linking this to nineteenth-century theories about "Judaizing," and ultimately links them to allegories about capital itself. With Shylock read as the "money form" and even Shakespeare as the "equivalent form," Halpern finds the latter anticipating certain moves of Marx's analytic. The book then takes a Lacanian turn, linking use-value to Lacan's Real. None of these moves, it should be stated, are in any way simplistic, for Halpern in his discussion of value and commodity fetishism makes explicit where the Marxian and Lacanian conceptions

differ, wryly boasting that "in discussing Antonio's pound of flesh as the Lacanian Thing, I have passed somewhat beyond the Marxist conception of use-value as mere utility into a more ambivalent and sublime region" (203). Going on once again to ask, almost rhetorically, if linking the "bleeding chunk of flesh" to use-value is a distortion, Halpern aptly responds to himself by a more informed explication of Marxian theory, one which introduces *labor* into the model and speaks of a commodity's value in terms of the occulting of "the exploitation of human muscle, bone, and spirit" occurring behind factory doors. This is again a helpful corrective to "materialist" approaches that all too often exclude the category of labor.

All in all, however, the emphasis seems less on such revolutionary sentiments and more on the vagaries and varieties of epistemological transformations. Indeed, Shakespeare himself is valued, when he is most valued, as one who offers up "epistemological commentary" (200) on scenes within his own plays. While Benjamin is invoked early on in Halpern's discussion of "historical allegory," it is not the Benjamin who called upon the image of the past to rise up in a "moment of danger," that is, Benjamin the revolutionary, but rather Benjamin the philosopher of history. The last chapter confirms this swerve or bias, deftly relating the modernist production of ideas of subjectivity in the context of the concept of the mechanical puppet. Here the study begins with a Shakespearean adaptation, an early W. S. Gilbert play in which failed actors are transformed into puppets of Hamlet and Ophelia. That plot then serves as a springboard for considerations of modernism's opposition to repetition and its desire for shock experience, the "unassimilable newness" desired by the play itself (249). The desire not to be obsolete is even echoed in the Hamlet travesty of Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Last Action Hero*, which again uncovers the "Hamletmachine" buried in the original text. Modernism, thus viewed, depicts the "hollowing out of subjectivity" and the "petering out of desire" (284), corresponding to Hamlet and his play.

It is insufficient to say that Halpern's book, lacking a synthesizing concluding chapter, ends merely on a "reading," given its dazzling leaps of subject register from text to critic to adaptations. Better that it does not have a forced synthesis, and that it is not too impatient in excavating the recent past to gain theory points. Perhaps this review needs no conclusion either.

Charles University, Prague

Donald K. Hedrick

Wollstonecraft's Daughters: Womanhood in England and France, 1780-1920 edited by Clarissa Campbell Orr. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996. Pp. x + 206. \$69.95.

Wollstonecraft's Daughters is a collection of essays on women who in various ways participated in debates about women's roles and opportunities in England and France from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. The women featured in these essays are considered "Wollstonecraft's daughters" in that they produced works in one of the many genres in which Wollstonecraft herself wrote—conduct manuals, educational treatises, political

tracts, histories, travelogues, novels, and reviews—or shared some of Wollstonecraft's concerns and beliefs. Orr contends in her Introduction that, although many of the women discussed in the book would have repudiated Wollstonecraft for her reputation as a political radical and licentious woman, all were influenced by her example and ideas. "Wollstonecraft's assertion that women could be citizens," Orr writes, "permanently changed the conceptual landscape" (9), and in this sense all women who explored "the woman question" after Wollstonecraft can be considered her spiritual daughters.

Few of the essays deal very directly with Wollstonecraft's life and work or influence on later figures. Pam Hirsch traces "Wollstonecraft's Problematic Legacy" for other English women throughout the nineteenth century, and M^{aire} Fedelma Cross discusses Wollstonecraft's importance for the French feminist and socialist Flora Tristan. Most of the other essays, however, make only passing reference to Wollstonecraft.

Readers of this journal will probably want to know that the book also is not concerned with literary women. All of the essays are written by historians and explore important social, cultural, and historical, but not literary, issues and figures. Only one essay—Jane Rendall's on Elizabeth Hamilton—treats a novelist, but even this analyzes Hamilton's *Memoirs of Agrippina, Wife of Germanicus* chiefly as a work of "philosophical history" rather than of fiction (81-82).

The English and French women discussed in these essays are philanthropists or social workers (Hazel Mills's essay on Catholic religious and lay sisters in nineteenth-century France and Marion Diamond's essay on the English-woman Maria Rye); writers of educational treatises or conduct manuals (Clarissa Campbell Orr on the Genevan Albertine Necker de Saussure and Henrietta Twyncross-Martin on Sarah Stickney Ellis); political activists (M^{aire} Fedelma Cross on Flora Tristan and James McMillan on Marie Maugeret, a Christian feminist who campaigned for women's suffrage in the late nineteenth century); political hostesses in the first forty years of Victoria's reign (essay by K. D. Reynolds); historians (Jane Rendall on Elizabeth Hamilton, as well as Diamond on Maria Rye); and anthropologists (Felicia Gordon on Edith Simcox and Madeleine Pelletier).

Most of the essays treat either French or English subjects. The exceptions are Gordon's study of English and French anthropologists Edith Simcox and Madeleine Pelletier and Cross's piece on Flora Tristan, who as mentioned above admired Wollstonecraft and studied English society and political organizations. Clarissa Campbell Orr's lengthy introduction, entitled "Cross-Channel perspectives," usefully surveys and compares the political histories and systems, religious institutions and traditions, laws, and cultures of the two countries. Nonetheless, the overall impression the book leaves is more of a collection of disparate studies of English and French women than of a consistent or in-depth comparison of the two cultures. Perhaps this lack of unity or consistency is unavoidable in any collection of essays by different hands, however, and the combination of works on various English and French figures does yield interesting insights and new information for readers (like myself) chiefly familiar with only one of these countries.

One theme that surfaces in a number of essays is the ways in which religion, usually considered a conservative force, empowered women and aided

the progress of feminism. Catholic religious and lay sisterhoods gave women experience working for social welfare outside the home or convent. French social Catholicism in the late nineteenth century also encouraged women like Marie Maugaret to work for the improvement of society, including the condition of women, rather than merely to cultivate their personal spiritual well-being. Albertine Necker de Saussure's Calvinism stressed the equality of all souls before God and had no sexual double standard; both men and women were expected to follow the same codes of sexual morality. Sarah Stickney Ellis's insistence on the moral superiority of women, based on a Christian interpretation of the world, gave women an important source of power and authority in the home and the empire. Maria Rye's Evangelical Christianity offered her an important emotional outlet and justification for useful, active philanthropical work. Finally, the Dissenting tradition in England, in which Wollstonecraft herself participated, along with important later feminists such as Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, supported women's right to a liberal education (see essays by Hirsch and Diamond).

Perhaps the chief impression left by this collection of essays is of the mixed motives, strange bedfellows, unfortunate consequences, and overall complex and untidy nature of feminism in the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Hamilton opposed the French Revolution and satirized Wollstonecraft as Bridgetina Botherim, but she shared Wollstonecraft's belief in the importance of education for girls and was one of only a few women of her time (along with Wollstonecraft) to take on the "masculine" genre of historical writing. The Victorian political hostesses Reynolds studies did not embrace any feminist principles, but they played an important role in the political scene of their time and thereby challenged the assumption that women should not be involved in government or public affairs. Marie Maugaret was "an intransigent Catholic," "a die-hard political reactionary," and "a rabid anti-Semite" (190), but she called herself a feminist and campaigned for women's suffrage, career opportunities, and economic rights. In the course of her career, Flora Tristan downplayed her unpopular feminist goals and focused on class conflict over gender conflict. Maria Rye, in an effort to provide job opportunities for surplus unmarried women in England, organized an emigration program that sent many women and children to Canada as virtual slaves. Sarah Stickney Ellis's advocacy of separate spheres for men and women and of the moral superiority of women in the home is so fraught with mixed implications that scholars, including Twyncross-Martin in this volume, cannot decide if she chiefly helped to empower or to limit women of her time. Perhaps the ironies and ambiguities these women exemplify constitute another way in which they are "Wollstonecraft's daughters," since Wollstonecraft herself both inspired and gave direction to the feminist movement but also set back its cause for much of the nineteenth century as a result of her reputation as a Jacobin and immoralist.

It is perhaps one of the greatest virtues of this volume that it helps to inform or remind us of the complex nature of women's lives and beliefs, and of the history of feminism, in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe. No steady march of progress or united sisterhood emerges from a reading of

these essays. Nonetheless, similar concerns and goals do appear among the disparate women studied, and the women with good intentions whose actions bear little fruit or cause actual harm are perhaps balanced out by those with no conscious loyalty to feminist principles who actually aid their advancement. *Wollstonecraft's Daughters* will be useful to all those who wish to learn more about the individuals discussed in the volume and about the multifaceted character of the campaign for women's rights over the last two hundred years.

California State, Long Beach

Beth Lau

High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film by Sharon Willis. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997. Pp. 266. \$16.95.

It is always a challenge to write about contemporary mass culture, in part because it is difficult to claim expertise, but even more because it renders problematic questions about archive, about inclusion and exclusion. However, critical interrogations of the present moment, like Sharon Willis's *High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film*, are crucial if you believe, as she does, that Hollywood film functions as a playing field for constructions of, and contestations over, race and gender. She takes as her starting point the idea that "our culture continues to be preoccupied with difference" (1), and yet, she argues, such differences, as they appear in Hollywood film, get eroticized or aestheticized, rather than examined or explored. This "fetishization of difference," in other words, which functions through an oscillation between recognition and disavowal, tends to block the kind of analysis that such films require in order to restore their "social context." Furthermore, she argues that there is a fundamental connection between gender and racial identities, such that, "in constructing gendered identifications, films and spectators are always more or less unconsciously engaging with racial identifications as well" (2). What she sets out to do, therefore, is to "restore a political content to the social differences that many films exhibit as mere aesthetic contrast" (2).

Part One of the book, entitled "Battles of the Sexes," uses three cases to explore the dialectic she has identified between gender and racial identity: in the first, she considers the popularity of the white male action figure, in the second, those films that rework the melodramatic tradition with police and detective thrillers, and in the third, films like *Thelma and Louise*, which depict the "thrilling and menacing figure of the murderous female hardbody" (21). In each of these cases she seeks to identify "those complex everyday representational moments of negotiation where one difference is made to stand in for, to do the job of, to trivialize or eclipse, the others" (6). The specific way that race and gender intersect, or interarticulate, in the texts she reads cannot be reduced to any simple formula, and this is both a strength and a weakness of the book. Because race—manifested as "accidental" or incidental in these

films—serves only as a mark of difference, it cannot be read to signify the same thing in all cases. In each case, she attempts to track its particular meaning and restore a “social context.” Towards this end, some of her readings are more convincing than others.

Willis most powerfully articulates her point about the unaccidental nature of the accidental African American character in her reading of *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*. In the tradition of Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, Willis brings to the surface the crucial role played by the black body in this film—a role that the filmic text works hard to deny. Ostensibly this film is about a struggle between two women, a mother and a nanny, but as Willis describes, the battle between the two women is triangulated through the character of Solomon, the African American handyman. In the film's opening sequence a camera moves from room to room in a house, arriving ultimately in the nursery “where an empty rocking chair signals the expectation of a new baby” (79). But this domestic scene, Willis notes, is intercut with footage of a man furiously riding a bicycle through empty streets. Because the opening sequence lasts for a long six minutes, and because this cyclist, who is seen only from the knees down, seems to be pedaling furiously towards the cheerful, well-lit domestic sphere, there is a mounting suspense about his arrival and his identity—and about what both will mean for the family. When the cyclist finally appears at the house, the camera sweeps up his body to reveal his identity: a mentally disabled African American looking for work as a handyman. When the pregnant mother sees Solomon, his head framed in the window, his image startles her and she drops the pitcher she is holding and it shatters on the floor. Willis uses this opening sequence to stage her point: “the film has set up the mere presence of an African American man as the explosive rupture in the seamless texture of this family interior” (80). The threat to the integrity of the nuclear family is posed not just by Peyton, the white nanny, but by the mere presence of Solomon, who unlike Peyton is actually trying to help. As Willis describes, “Solomon exists as a character only to be punished, bullied, humiliated, beaten, and finally, to save this white family despite the way that they abuse and mistrust him” (81); while the film ostensibly stages the conflict between white middle-class women, pitting nanny against mother, women who work in the home against women who work outside it, Willis convincingly argues that Solomon's presence interrupts and complicates the female conflict. Incredibly, despite all of this subtext, *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*, Willis argues, pretends for all the world that Solomon's racial difference is “a mere distraction, a detail” (82).

Part Two of *High Contrast*, entitled “Ethnographies of the White Gaze,” examines the new form of auteurism that has developed in American film of the 1980s and '90s by looking at three cases: David Lynch, Spike Lee, and Quentin Tarantino. Her critique of auteurism—that fascinations with the auteur himself, with a signature style, and with formal analyses tend to block crucial critical engagements with the film and thereby elide questions of race, class, and gender—is an old one, but certainly worth remembering when considering the reception of these films.

Her reading of David Lynch's film *Wild at Heart* hinges on the first scene, which she pointedly refers to as a “lynching”: “A white man smashes a black

man's skull to a pulp" (131). Recovering this "primal scene," one that has been largely ignored by the critics, enables her to underscore her claim that black bodies in these texts—even those which seem to be "throwaways"—are part of a dense web of social meanings that the films themselves work to deny. In the case of *Wild at Heart*, though, Willis is more interested in the act of repression or denial that allows this scene to go unnoticed. These scenes don't affect us, don't make us think, because the "shock" forces us to look away; "Such a forcing of the look," she writes, "also forcibly deflects our attention: we can easily forget the terms at work here" (137). Shock, she argues, short-circuits analysis, creates a sense of distance between the spectator and the image, and ultimately participates in an aestheticization of violence: "Part of Lynch's appeal," she writes, "may reside in his work's attempt to parade the rhetoric of racism and sexism in a framework that allowed us to feel ironically distant, inoculated from these pathologies, as it were, as the films emphasized instead 'fantasy,' 'style,' and the 'avant-garde'" (155). Many have argued that the radical potential of shock to bring about a change of consciousness, or as Walter Benjamin argued, to wake people from the dream world of mystification, is no longer possible on the formal level. Advertisements and the omnipresent visual style of MTV have desensitized spectators to such a degree that it is no longer possible to be shocked. If the images that Lynch or Tarantino present *are* shocking, if they do, as Willis suggests, cause us to "start, or shudder, avert our eyes, gasp involuntarily" (151), then isn't it fair to say that they are, in fact, moving us, bringing us closer to and not further from a shocking spectacle of violence? I don't quite agree with Willis here, as it seems to me that being subjected to extreme violence might be instrumental in waking one up—rather than inoculating one to—the violence that in other films, as in everyday life, has become banal and *unshocking*.

Willis's reading of Tarantino's films is provocative and insightful, particularly in her description of the way the bathroom functions as a key nexus: one "that connects blood and violence to anal eroticism and smearing," as a place where one "get[s] caught with one's pants down," as a site that "realigns cultural authority in relation to refuse, or trash, on the one hand, and to 'race,' on the other" (189). Willis's reading of Tarantino's films brings into focus a form of racial fetishization that is perhaps most visible in *Pulp Fiction*, in what is referred to as the "Bonnie situation": Willis is on the mark when she describes how Tarantino, by placing himself in the film as Jimmy, and giving himself an African American wife (Bonnie), attempts to exonerate himself from "the racist edge" of his discourse: when Jimmy's buddies show up at his house with a corpse, he says, "What do you think this is? Dead nigger storage?" As Willis describes, "Bonnie functions, then, as his alibi; she is supposed to exempt him from cultural rules, from ordinary whiteness . . . she both authorizes this moment of verbal smearing and spewing and symbolically cleans it up, sanitizes it" (207). Willis cautions, in other words, "that we need to entertain the possibility that *Pulp Fiction* might resecure racialized representations for a racist imaginary, even as it tries to work them loose from it" (211). Nevertheless, she suggests, Tarantino's films do seem to foreshadow some sea-change, as they do bespeak some changes in the nature and deployment of racialized images.

Willis's text does a lovely job of illustrating how filmic "representations tend to display and explore masculinity and femininity 'in crisis,'" and how "this undefined state of crisis appears independent of any social context" (96); she is right, I think, to point to the ways that, even Tarantino's films neglect the social context that gives meaning to racialized images. In this sense *High Contrast* will be an important and useful text for both film scholars and students of film. However, reading Willis's book I found myself wishing that she herself had brought in more social context. I found myself wondering how she would read these films in light of, or against, the infamous video of the Rodney King beating, in the context of the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill case, or against the backdrop of the affirmative action debates.

At one moment in the book she does suggest an underlying political/social context: the rise of "multiculturalism." In her discussion of *Die Hard*, she identifies the fundamental problem of multiculturalism: in its depiction of gender, race, ethnicity and class, "the film establishes no relations among these differences. Instead they are made to appear as equally weighted or charged and nonintersecting, or as intersecting only coincidentally" (51). This critique of multiculturalism, which only appears in her analysis of *Die Hard*, ought to have played a more central role in her analysis. Multiculturalism offers up "equality" as a done deal; it espouses pluralism and yet represses or denies the web of power, the economic and political relationships that privilege certain groups over others. It seems that this particular paradox, the irony of multiculturalism, is in fact the "social context" for what Willis skillfully describes in her book as the "fetishization of difference."

Wayne State University

Alison Landsberg

Tropical Multiculturalism: A Comparative History of Race in Brazilian Cinema and Culture by Robert Stam. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997. Pp. xvi + 409. \$59.95, cloth; \$19.95, paper.

Robert Stam's *Tropical Multiculturalism: A Comparative History of Race in Brazilian Cinema and Culture* courageously addresses a number of topics as vast and complex as Brazil and the United States, the two countries whose cultural and historical formation he contrasts: not only does he propose to retell Brazilian film history from its racial perspective, but also to present a broader history of the country itself; to compare racial formations in Brazil and the United States; and to discuss the issue of racialized representations (22). This ambitious and persuasive book offers an intelligent critique of multicultural representation grounded on solid, firsthand knowledge of Brazilian cinema and reality.

Stam shows how the mass media present to the American public the image of Brazil as a country in which absolute social injustice and everyday political violence are somewhat passively accepted by a suffering, but fundamentally happy, people, always ready to dance the samba, like Carmen Miranda, or to play soccer, like "Pelé." Hollywood, not surprisingly, plays a major role in this mystification of Brazilian culture. Films like *Wild Orchid* (1989) and

Lambada: The Forbidden Dance (1990) use a bizarre combination of caricature notions of supposedly loose sexual mores to reinforce the stereotyped "carnival" notion of a "happy," though miserable, country. Equally caricatural, but from a different perspective, *Moon over Parador* (1988) comically depicts Brazil as yet another of the atavistic Latin America banana republics, whereas *Medicine Man* (1992) opposes ecologically conscious Americans and their concern for the rain forest to greedy, irresponsible Brazilians interested only in immediate profit. These stereotypes are important targets in this well-argued book.

Departing from the fundamental assumption that the United States and Brazil are eminently "comparable" (1), Stam starts his study by offering an exciting preamble stating the foundations of his analysis of "the specular play of sameness and difference" between the two countries. He analyzes the mixture of admiration and mistrust present in the way Brazil and the United States view one another and contrasts the different impacts of African slavery on American and Brazilian cultural formations. He draws special attention to the black presence in both elite and popular Brazilian culture and surveys the African elements in the most ordinary aspects of Brazilian life.

Stam's treatment of Brazilian film opens with a minute analysis of the Brazilian silent movies, a topic previously given scant attention. Stam argues that Brazil's efforts to present itself as "merely a tropical appendage of Europe" (63) were part of the much broader process of the struggle for shaping a national identity which followed the independence in 1822. His analysis of the period is careful and cogent, though it may be argued that his intelligent discussion of Indianist themes in the silent age would have profited had he placed it within the broader Romantic movement that shaped Brazilian culture from the mid-nineteenth to the early decades of the twentieth century.

Arguably one of the best moments of Robert Stam's study is his chapter on the *chanchada*—1929-1949. His comparative cultural analysis of the ambiguous figure of Carmen Miranda (84-88) lays bare the mechanisms of cultural reductionism at work in the figure of the "Brazilian bombshell" and contrasts the Brazilian and American perceptions of this Hollywood creation. He also focuses on the *chanchada* (a kind of movie *vaudeville*, a genre virtually unknown to the American public but paramount in Brazil's film history) and on Grande Othelo, a black actor centrally responsible for the tremendous popular success of the genre in Brazil. Comparing Grande Othelo to "Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, or James Earl Jones," Stam examines his career, exploring the social ambiguities arising from the major success enjoyed by a black actor in the strongly racist setting of the thirties and forties. He is especially good on the complexities of Othelo's relationship with his white partner in the *chanchadas* (Oscarito). His overall assessment of the implications of the popular success of this comic mode to the shaping and reinforcement of racial—and racist—discourse is particularly insightful.

Of particular interest for the American reader is the discussion of Orson Welles's famous Brazilian project (*It's All True*), "a semidocumentary aimed at fostering the Good Neighbor Policy and countering Nazi propaganda in Latin America" (107). The author earnestly defends Welles's project in Brazil and attempts to vindicate the film from some of the criticism of it, stating that the negative reactions suggest a pernicious racial subtext.

Stam's analysis of Brazil's film production of the mid-fifties (which includes films such as *Black Orpheus*) and early sixties (including *Bahia de Todos os Santos*; *Assalto ao Trem Pagador*) focuses strongly on the filmic representa-

tion of blackness. Comparing the cinematic movement of the "Cinema Novo" with its musical counterpart, *bossa nova* (popular in the States through Antonio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto), Robert Stam attempts to provide a broader cultural context for the changing nature of the black presence in Brazilian film. Due in part (but not exclusively) to a broader cultural movement that started to value the strong African elements present in the culture of Bahia (a state in northeast Brazil), black characters and themes moved more to center-stage. The enormously popular novels of Jorge Amado, and their celebration of Bahia's blackness, were translated to the screen from a perspective radically different from the black representations of earlier decades. Robert Stam's analysis of race discourse in the film production of the period is particularly minute, and extends itself to encompass the related ideas of Afro celebration and "cultural anthropophagy" elemental in the shaping of Brazilian cinema up to the seventies.

The study concludes with an impressively up-to-date discussion of the latest Brazilian productions, including a discussion of topics such as the attempts of filmmaking by Indians and the political use of cinema by popular movements. The final discussion of polyphonic discourse, race, and representation is a thought-provoking account of important aspects of political and cultural life in contemporary Brazil.

Stam's *Tropical Multiculturalism* lives up to the expectations it creates in intelligently addressing a number of vast and complex cultural themes. It would have been enriched, however, by making more extensive use of some relevant works by well-known Brazilian intellectuals who have studied, in depth, Brazilian cultural formation, scholars such as Antonio Candido, who discusses the impact of European and American models on Brazilian cultural life, Caio Prado Jr., a major historian of Brazil's political and economic formation, and Alfredo Bosi, who, in a recent work, addresses the problem of racial representation in Brazil. Similarly, since many Brazilian films up to the seventies are based on canonical works of Brazilian literature, it would have been helpful to discuss literary reception as a context for film versions. On the whole, however, Stam's book succeeds admirably in its aims, providing a subtle analysis of both Brazilian cinematic culture and multicultural and racial representations.

University of São Paulo, Brazil

José Garcez Ghirardi

Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class by Eric Lott. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Pp. 314. \$17.95, paper.

Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America by Laura Kipnis. New York: Grove Press, 1996. Pp. 226. \$22.00.

Class and sexuality seem to be at a wide remove as categories of critical analysis and textual concern—at least in the realm of contemporary cultural criticism and theory. Alongside the work of contemporary critics and theorists of sexuality (most notably queer theorists and some feminist and gender theorists) who employ postmodern concepts of subjectivity to emphasize

sexual multiplicities and the complex, often shifting nature of erotic identifications, the work of critics and theorists of social class can seem staid and mundane. Indeed, Marxism, the richest intellectual tradition for conceptualizing class as a social formation and for theorizing class relations, has tended to stabilize class as an "identity" (somehow tied, although in various post-Marxist accounts complexly and ambiguously, to relations of production or economic base) rather than to engage conflicted psychic processes of identification, while reducing questions of sexuality largely to the issue of reproduction. Certainly, historians have addressed complex interdeterminations of class and sexuality in a number of ways: historians of domesticity, for instance, have identified domestic, heterosexual arrangements as a primary site of middle-class formation and culture in the nineteenth century; historians of the working class (especially feminist historians such as Kathy Peiss and Christine Stansell) have documented departures of working-class sexual practices from middle-class heterosexual, marital norms; historians of gay and lesbian sexualities (such as George Chauncey, Elizabeth Kennedy, and Madeline Davis) have correlated class identification, (homo-)erotic practices, and certain forms of gender and sexual identity; while John D'Emilio, negotiating between economic history and the history of sexuality, has argued that industrial capitalism, and its particular gender divisions of labor, created the historical conditions that made what Foucault termed the "invention" of the homosexual possible. At the same time, literary critics have more readily embraced the postmodern critique of foundationalist epistemologies and have (re-)defined class as less an "objective" entity than a relationally defined construct, one constituted through the play of linguistic difference. For example, Nancy Armstrong and Anita Levy, drawing from Foucault as well as from a certain interpretation of Antonio Gramsci, have argued that discursive (especially novelistic) formations of sexuality are a central site in the formation of middle-class hegemony; Armstrong even argues that this ideological configuration preceded the rise of the middle-class *per se*—although in all these accounts (as in Foucault) relations of production occupy a distant position in the analysis. Considering these methodological differences, one may or may not subscribe to Teresa Ebert's distinction between a "ludic" critical practice (founded on poststructuralist assumptions and addressing itself exclusively to cultural politics) and a critical practice of "resistance" (indebted to historical materialism and regarding culture as articulated by material forces). But Ebert is surely correct to point out that critics and theorists who place sexuality at the center of their analyses don't regularly engage with questions of class, while analysts of class have tended to relegate questions of sexuality (let alone gender) to the periphery. Social class can seem a hard, material limit to the pleasurable forms of sexual indeterminacy and performativity emphasized in much theoretical work on sex: when class gets called (in), so to speak, the party is over.

Some of these critical and theoretical difficulties are evident when one considers a concept like "performativity," which is central to much contemporary work on sexuality. While "the performative" has served as a crucial concept for dismantling normative formations of sexuality, race, and gender and in establishing them as socially constructed, the performative is a more problematic, indeed contradictory, analytical move in terms of social class, in

part because it threatens to reinforce hegemonic conceptions of class difference. The notion of "class as performative" is intellectually and politically useful when engaging instances where class, and the reproduction of poverty, have been pathologized and "essentialized," often by mapping class onto racial and ethnic categories. An understanding of class as performed and performative also can destabilize the bourgeois naturalization of class differences through the mystifications of "taste" (a capacity partly localized and inscribed on the body) and the bodily signs of class (e.g., clothing, manners). But because social class has often been conceptualized, particularly in the United States, as *inherently and constitutively performative*, the idea of class as performative may reinforce the dominant conception of class location as the product of individual agency and determination; as a result, it can obscure the existence of persistent, structural, and transgenerational class inequities, as well as material and economic constraints on the performance of class identities and identifications. At the same time, theories of the performative (as is evident especially in Judith Butler's work) can refigure "the material" itself, arguably reducing its complex determinations to the singular referent of the "body-as-signifier." There is a related problem that involves the performative as a theorization of what Butler (following Simone de Beauvoir) terms a condition of "becoming": it is only when one attains a certain distance from a class identification that one can perform it—which in the case of class arguably depends, at least in part, on the attainment of cultural literacies and competencies that both are produced through and enable class mobility.

The seeming disparateness of these critical accounts of class and sex underscores the importance of the two studies I consider here, which take both class and sex as crucial categories of analysis. While Eric Lott and Laura Kipnis employ different, albeit overlapping, critical approaches and explore distinct "archives," both address the complex entanglements of class and sexuality in rich, surprising, and mutually illuminating ways. Lott's text engages a matrix of masculine sexuality (especially forms of cross-racial erotic desire and identification) to examine forms of white male working-class subjectivity in antebellum America. Kipnis's focus is contemporary and primarily engages, as it attempts to recast, feminist debates about pornography: her primary argument is that pornography is a discourse about social class—a fact acutely evident in discussions of porn by (middle-class) feminists. Each uses one category—sexuality for Lott, class for Kipnis—to interrogate what has typically been understood in other terms: race and class for Lott's materials, sexuality and gender for Kipnis's.

Eric Lott's *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* examines the fantasy space of minstrelsy, a popular cultural form that focused white workingmen's conflictual, racialized erotic investments in antebellum America. Lott's book is part of a larger field of working-class "whiteness" studies: David Roediger, for example, has tracked the changing meanings of such terms as "free labor," "wage slavery," and "white slavery" during this period as an index of the racialization of the antebellum working class. But while Roediger treats these racial metaphors as empirical evidence through which to chart the evolution of white working-class identity, Lott troubles the category of identity altogether: employing contemporary

psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theories, he destabilizes any singular notion of class "identity" and opens up the complexity of white workingmen's identificatory processes. Lott's well-received book is, in many respects, an exemplary work in American cultural studies, with its deftly theorized handling of questions of audience involvement in culture and, especially, in its meeting the challenge of doing cultural studies work with "historical" (i.e., noncontemporary) materials. Rejecting an older American Studies emphasis on "representative" texts "by asking questions about the role of culture in the political development of a specific national entity," Lott's project is indebted to the tradition of British cultural studies (especially Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall) and to the theorists that continue to inform that tradition (especially Gramsci). Lott focuses on the cultural and political significance of popular materials, and stresses "the immense importance . . . of cultural texts requiring relatively few 'inherent resources' such as literacy or education and therefore offering relatively unmediated access to those whose struggles make history." Following E. P. Thompson's definition of culture "as a whole way of conflict," Lott suggests that the challenge facing cultural studies practitioners in the United States is to "resist the tendency in American versions of cultural studies to examine culture apart from political structures and movements—an airless 'politics' of the cultural rather than social and political cultures." Attempting a more dialectical analysis of "cultural politics," Lott endeavors to "situate the analysis of cultural forms . . . with regard to the analysis of social and cultural formations," which he defines, after Gramsci, as "the organizations, processes, and overdetermined conjunctures that bear most significantly on political life." Such work can yield understanding of "historical forms of consciousness and subjectivity" (11)—the chief concern and special capacity, for Lott, of cultural studies work (10-11).

In attempting to (re-)construct the "historical forms of consciousness and subjectivity" of minstrelsy's audience—its conflictual, shifting identifications—Lott draws from a number of sources: the work of labor historians who describe historical contexts that, Lott suggests, shaped audience members' particular investments in minstrelsy; extant minstrelsy texts (e.g., songs, scripts); published reviews and unpublished accounts of performances by audience members; and accounts by blackface performers themselves. Lott's method is interdisciplinary and his approach eclectic: he draws from a variety of approaches (performance theory, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Bakhtin's poetics of the body, Victor Turner's theory of dramatic ritual), as well as critical methods of close textual analysis, to examine minstrelsy texts as "an index of popular white racial feeling in the United States" (5). Rejecting both "reactionary, nostalg[i]c" arguments about minstrelsy as a reflection and product of black "folk" culture, and a "narrowly functionalist" analysis of minstrelsy as an unproblematic instance of racial domination (while acknowledging that the refutation of minstrelsy's racial stereotypes "still, in certain instances, offers the terms in which cultural struggle ought to be waged"), Lott presents minstrelsy as a site of highly mediated racial exchange in antebellum culture, a "shape-shifting middle-term in racial conflict," that was always connected to—and partially determined by—economic relations (6-8). Drawing from Homi Bhabha's analysis of ambivalence as constitutive of colonial subjectivity and ideology, Lott's basic argument is that minstrelsy stages working-

class white men's *ambivalence* toward black men—fundamentally shaped by the institution of chattel slavery—which Lott characterizes as a process of “love and theft”: both identification with black men as exploited workers and (homo-)erotic valorization of the black male body (the “love” of Lott’s title), and a sense of white racial entitlement to (“theft” of) black culture and black labor. Following Leslie Fiedler’s well-known observation that “born theoretically white, we are permitted to pass our childhood as imaginary Indians, our adolescence as imaginary Negroes, and only then are expected to settle down to being what we really are: white once more,” Lott explores how “the assumption of dominant codes of masculinity in the United States was (and still is) partly negotiated through an imaginary black interlocutor” (53). Minstrelsy, Lott contends, instantiated a certain (class-based) structure of racial feeling and gave it dramatic, indeed ritualized form.

Two chapters can serve to demonstrate Lott’s method as well as his argument about the interdeterminations of race, class, and sex in minstrelsy. Chapter 5, “‘The Seeming Counterfeit’: Early Blackface Acts, the Body, and Social Contradiction,” unpacks the erotic dimensions of early minstrel acts in their first fifteen years after 1830, a period marked by working-class militancy and widespread social unrest, especially in northeastern cities, the nation’s industrializing centers and the sites where minstrelsy (first developed in frontier towns like Cincinnati and Louisville) eventually gained its broadest audience. According to Lott, before the depression in the early 1840s muted class resentment and redirected it along racial lines, white male workers “targeted both employers and black workers, reformers (often wealthy or evangelical whites) and their ‘fashionable’ black associates”; these political struggles—and their attendant complex emotions—were mediated by minstrelsy’s “interpenetrations of race and class” (111). In particular, Lott detects a utopian desire for true interracial workers’ coalition—an identification between “wage slaves” and chattel slaves on the basis of exploited labor—registered in minstrelsy’s preoccupation with black *bodies*. Drawing from Richard Dyer’s analysis of the body as a central problem in legitimating a capitalist economy because of its overt embodiment of human labor—and thus its potential for conjuring up that economy’s exploitative organization—Lott argues that the “black body in particular has . . . served as the site of both ‘remembering and denying the inescapability of the body in the economy,’ a figuration of the world’s body and its labor, easily called up and just as easily denied” (118). Minstrelsy’s fixation on the black body figured a number of white male desires and fears: in particular, the fear of slave insurrection; fantasies and fears of miscegenation (including white male lust for black women and phobia about black male desire for white women); white male homosexual fantasies and—in the proliferation of minstrelsy’s phallic imagery—erotic investment in the black penis; and a kind of regressive orality, staged by minstrelsy’s emphasis on malapropisms that called attention to “the wagging of tongues, the fatness of painted lips” (122). Reading these desires, and their “varied social and political effects” in the context of 1830s political history (especially artisan protest against “wage slavery” and the proletarianization of labor; artisan abolitionism and the ambiguities of Democratic race politics in the 1830s; and the 1834 anti-abolitionist riots in New York), Lott unpacks some stock figures of minstrelsy as multiply determined “condensation[s] of race

and class." In one striking interpretation, for example, he reads the figure of the "black dandy," Zip Coon, as "a figuration of the antislavery reformer . . . the only current social type embodying a superior class position with racial overtones" (134).

Chapter 6, "'Genuine Negro Fun': Racial Pleasure and Class Formation in the 1840s," continues this analysis of minstrelsy's forms of "racial pleasure" and subjectivity during the more conservative post-panic years, when the minstrel show developed into a two-part, night-long entertainment. As Lott describes it, "The minstrel show . . . met the crisis of the early 1840s with an intensified white egalitarianism that, for all its real instability, buried class tensions and permitted class alliances along rigidifying racial lines" (145). At the same time, Lott focuses on the minstrel show's "unusual set of racial and sexual fantasies and representations"—especially the widespread "preoccupation . . . with oral and genital amusement" (145). Lott unpacks here and elsewhere "minstrelsy's obsession with the [black] penis" as a figuration of white workers' (homosocial) identification with black men as exploited workers; their homosexual desire for black men (rerouted, through such strategies as cross-dressing, onto the bodies of women); and their anxieties about castration (also registered in insistent appeals, in workingmen's rhetoric, to ideals of "manliness"). Lott demonstrates how the shows featured certain strategic bodily zones—"fat lips, gaping mouths, sucks on the sugarcane; big heels, huge noses, enormous bustles"—to present "a child's eye view of sexuality"; exemplifying what Bakhtin termed "grotesque realism," minstrelsy activated preoedipal fantasies that were at once antibourgeois, misogynous, and racist. In other words, while staging a controlled form of regression in its white, mostly male spectators that allowed workers newly subjected to industrial discipline and morality to recollect preindustrial pleasures, these "low" pleasures were displaced (in minstrelsy's songs, jokes, and dramatic skits) onto the bodies of black people, especially black women. According to Lott, "By way of the 'grotesque' (black) body, which . . . denied 'with a laugh the ludicrous pose of autonomy adopted by the subject' and reopened the normally repressive boundaries of bodily orifices, the white subject could transform fantasies of racial assault and subversion into riotous pleasure, turn insurrection and intermixture into harmless fun—even though the outlines of the fun disclose its troubled sources" (147). He argues that "disgust bears the impress of desire": the "racial repressed is . . . retained as a (usually eroticized) component of fantasy"; "Hence the threat of this projected material [i.e., white fantasies of racial "Others"], and the occasional pleasure of its threat" (149). Constituted through racial splitting, white subjectivity, for Lott, "was and is . . . a mobile conflictual fusion of power, fear, and desire, absolutely dependent on the Otherness it seeks to exclude and constantly open to transgression" (150).

In unpacking the "mobile conflictual fusion" of white racial feeling, Lott advances multiple interpretations of minstrelsy texts, seeing complexity, ambiguity, and ambivalence where others have seen univocal expressions of race hatred. He suggests that minstrelsy could mobilize in the realm of fantasy audience members' contradictory class identifications: for instance, upwardly-mobile men in contradictory class locations (such as artisans on the rise to becoming masters and clerks with working-class cultural ties) might keep a necessary (ironic) distance from the shows while enjoying them none-

theless: "When the b'hoys screamed that they were 'sons of freedom,' the shopkeeper raised a shout he may have retracted with a raised eyebrow. . . . Enjoying the show at one remove, they just as surely reveled in the injuries of class" (158). One of Lott's most compelling arguments involves his discussion of minstrelsy's misogynous imagery, which he interprets with reference to the reorganization of working-class gender roles in and out of the home during the 1840s. Drawing from the work of Christine Stansell, Lott demonstrates that the "shocks of the wage system," including women's entry into wage labor and participation in commercialized leisure activities, challenged certain "masculinist traditions" as well as patriarchal domestic authority. This anxiety about masculinity in relation to (white) women was both represented and warded off through the staging of the (transvestite) "wench" figure (an embodiment of the "phallic" woman); similarly, frequent evocations of black women as symbolically "castrated" (blinded) in minstrel songs allowed male spectators to disavow their fear of castration by mastering "the horrifying lack for which she stood" (152). Ultimately, these highly theatricalized images of women were little more than a "cover" for minstrelsy's real erotic story—white men's sexual desire for black men, which was, according to Lott, "everywhere to be found in minstrel acts." The figure of the wench explicitly "brought homosexual desire to the stage" while providing a convenient defense against it. As Lott states, "cross-dressing in the minstrel show intended to clear a space in which homoeroticism could find halting, humiliated, but nonetheless public expression" (163-65).

One of the great strengths of *Love and Theft* is the tremendous richness and subtlety of Lott's arguments, especially his ability to attend to issues of class, sexuality, gender, and racial identification in relation to one another while indicating the cultural complexity of minstrelsy as popular form. Having taught this book to graduate students several times, I remain impressed upon successive readings by the breadth and depth of Lott's scholarship, the thoroughness of his archival work, and by the virtuosity of his interpretations, his relentlessness in drawing out the nuances and complexities of the texts he works with and his ability to draw suggestive connections among them. The text as a whole, however, begs certain theoretical questions, the first of which involves Lott's interdisciplinary effort to bring together and mediate quite different bodies of scholarship (poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, and post-modern theories of language and subjectivity; social and political histories of the antebellum working class), the result of which is a somewhat contradictory definition of social class that is, itself, largely unexamined in the book. While contemporary theory enables Lott to theorize class as a complex social identification (one that appears in articulation, in a social formation, with other categories and divisions) and to dismantle "binary racial categories in favor of multiply determined and positioned subjects" (5), the historical scholarship upon which his interpretations largely rely tends to define the working class empirically, as a locus of shared interests. A related theoretical question involves the usefulness of psychoanalytic theory for understanding "subaltern" subjects (a question eloquently raised, in the case of the nineteenth-century working class, in Carolyn Kay Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman*). In addition, while Lott argues suggestively that sexuality, race, and class are interwoven in minstrelsy—and that particular erotic desires

constitute the conflictual matrix of white working-class male subjectivity—he offers no real explanation for why the particular stereotype of black male sexuality foregrounded in minstrelsy (black men as hypersexualized and hyper-masculine), rather than some other sexual stereotype or ideology of black masculinity, served the demands of white fantasy. Although Lott suggests that the sexualization of the black male body provided a way of “reducing” or containing that body’s subversive power (118), he gives no account of why these particular sexual (and sexualizing) fantasies of black masculinity were given routine expression on the minstrel stage. How, exactly, is one to theorize a structuring relation between class and sexuality?

Finally, in defining minstrelsy as a white working-class masculine form, Lott wholly omits from his analysis working-class women, who were a small (unspecified and unstudied) part of minstrelsy’s audience (this absence bespeaks the masculinism of labor history more generally). How did these women engage with minstrel shows; what fantasies and desires on the part of workingwomen did minstrelsy enable and mobilize? If previous critical assessments, emphasizing the univocal meanings of minstrelsy, reduced at the same time the complexity of both popular culture and working-class subjectivity, the absence of workingwomen from Lott’s analysis reinforces their invisibility (even in labor history) as working-class subjects. This is a particularly striking absence in Lott’s study, given the centrality of sexuality to constructions of workingwomen’s identities during this period, and the emphasis on sexuality as a primary locus of workingwomen’s exploitation, oppression, and struggle. This may be seen, for example, in Orestes Brownson’s equation of textile workers with “prostitutes” and Lowell women’s refutation of that label; in the prominence of seduction narratives in antebellum literature about workingwomen; and in the sexual connotations of the phrase “white slavery,” which assumed prominence in the later 1840s. Since, in one reformer’s acute phrasing, a workingwoman always has “something else to sell” besides her labor, commodified labor can become commodified sex, and workingwomen’s class identification (and oppression) is constitutively sexualized. Such examples suggest that the capitalist commodification of women’s labor, and the patriarchal commodification of women’s sexuality (through marriage or prostitution), are inextricable in the antebellum formation of what contemporary theorists have termed “white capitalist patriarchy.” Because of the interdeterminations of sex and class in constituting workingwomen’s class location, working-class womanhood would seem to be a crucial juncture for theorizing the complex, shifting processes of class identification.

Like *Love and Theft*, Laura Kipnis’s *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* takes a despised popular form and attempts to shift the terms of cultural analysis. Like Lott, Kipnis argues against a simplifying account of popular culture and its audience(s): She emphasizes the representational complexity of pornography as a form of culture, as well as the complexity of the desires it mobilizes and, by extension, the subjects who consume it. Indeed, Kipnis argues outright that the prevailing view of pornography (a view that creates such strange bedfellows as Jesse Helms, Allan

Bloom, and Catharine MacKinnon) as devoid of aesthetic significance and as expressing only a single meaning (e.g., social decay, misogyny) is a product of classist assumptions: "Pornography isn't viewed as having complexity, because its audience isn't viewed as having complexity, and this propensity for oversimplification gets reproduced in every discussion about pornography" (177). In taking pornography seriously as a form of culture and as an "expressive medium in the positive sense" (163), Kipnis performs a class critique of a range of pornographic "texts" (especially pornographic "subgenres" such as fat porn and transvestite porn) as well as debates about pornography which, she argues, primarily express the class-based assumptions, prejudices, and emotions of middle-class critics (e.g., disgust; offense at pornography's flouting of middle-class sensibilities). Indeed, Kipnis reads simplistic, critical constructions of porn as symptomatic of middle-class disgust, a "reaction-formation against pornography's profoundly destabilizing qualities" (173). Throughout the book, though less rigorously and systematically than Lott (in part because she works in contemporary materials, in part because its intended audience extends beyond academe), Kipnis draws connections between popular culture and relevant political and economic contexts that shape pornography's "cultural politics" and give them meaning. For example, in her analysis of fat pornography, she traces the "national revulsion toward fat" to the dictates of the self-regulated individual under capitalism as well as to the widening gap between rich and poor: "Perhaps the fear of an out-of-control body is not unrelated to the fear of out-of-control masses with their voracious demands and insatiable appetites—not just for food, but for social resources and entitlement programs" (101). Echoing Adorno's analysis of the dialectic of luxury (its ability to symbolize a utopian vision of plenitude for everyone as well as personal ostentation), Kipnis argues that "the spectacle of fat . . . excites those same longings for plenitude (and equal distribution of it) that factor into our simultaneous fascination and hatred for the rich. Can it be coincidental that the best slogan for socialism is 'Eat the rich,' given that consumption is the everyday negotiation between need, desire, and resources—which always exists in combination with a wary, jealous watchfulness about who's getting the 'bigger piece of the pie'?" (104).

Like Lott, Kipnis is concerned with the politics of aesthetic forms, as well as the social constitution of the category of the "aesthetic" itself. Her book engages debates about the historically shifting relationship between "high" and "low" culture, and about the role of culture, the "aesthetic," and the body in constituting and symbolizing class distinctions. Drawing from the work of historians such as Lynn Hunt, Kipnis argues that "modern pornography (up until around the nineteenth century) operated against politics and religious authority as a form of social criticism, a vehicle for attacking officialdom, which responded, predictably, by attempting to suppress it. Pornography was defined less by its content than by the efforts of those in power to eliminate it and whatever social agendas it transported" (163). Extending that argument to the present, Kipnis shows that the category of the pornographic remains similarly labile, unstable—and political. It is certainly the case that determining what is or is not pornography is notoriously up for grabs, and changes according to the particular agenda and ideological investments of the definer, as well as the cultural location in which the materials in question

are consumed (e.g., art museum, porn house). Kipnis makes the point about porn's definitional slipperiness quite powerfully when she observes that magazines like *Dimensions*, featuring large models in lingerie, or *Guys in Gowns*, featuring male transvestites, are officially classified as porn in most communities, even though the models in their pictorials are fully clothed. Pornography, Kipnis contends, is less about the specific content of pictorial, filmic, or textual materials than a cultural "container" for those representations and impulses deemed socially dangerous, a strategy for policing the boundaries of culture. Drawing, like Lott, on Bakhtin, Kipnis argues that pornography has been defined precisely in opposition to the "aesthetic," and that this cultural distinction has served to protect "high culture" against the debasements of the "low" (the lower classes, low culture, what Bakhtin terms "the lower bodily stratum"): "One aspect of pornography's social function is to provide a repository for those threatening, problematic materials and imagery banished from the culture at large—for the unaesthetic" (94). Kipnis endeavors to deconstruct the aesthetic/porn binary at different points in the book with varying degrees of success (perhaps least successfully in chapter 2, where in an unnecessarily complicated argument she recasts the art/porn distinction as involving sublimated eroticism vs. explicit sex). But Kipnis's most powerful argument is a political one: that aesthetic distinctions are not universal truths but are historically specific forms of class power; and that, in treating porn like art, we become able to see the complexity of its meanings. Staging the return of the repressed contents of culture and individual psyche, pornography for Kipnis serves as a crucial form of public discourse: "Reading between the bodies, you can . . . see the way that pornography lends itself as a form, in fairly mobile ways . . . for expression of what's routinely muzzled from other public forums" (viii). This is porn's chief "social service": "revealing these cultural sore spots, of elucidating not only the connection between sex and the social, but between our desires, our 'selves,' and the casual everyday brutality of cultural conformity" (121). In particular, porn "insist[s] on a sanctioned space for fantasy. This is its most serious demand and the basis of much of the controversy it engenders, because pornography has a talent for making its particular fantasies look like dangerous and socially destabilizing incendiary devices" (163). To the extent that Kipnis's position is a defense of porn, it is a defense of porn's publicization of the culturally repressed—thus, its exposure of class assumptions—and a defense of erotic fantasy as a crucial, albeit complicated, arena of freedom.

If taking porn seriously as a form of culture, political resistance, and erotic fantasy is an uncomfortable (indeed, offensive) critical move for some readers—well, Kipnis suggests, that is precisely the point. Like *Love and Theft*, *Bound and Gagged* is ultimately a book about affect: specifically, the ways in which cultural representations mobilize certain affective responses (such as pleasure, desire, and/or disgust) and constitute through those forms of affect particular classed and gendered subjects. Kipnis powerfully resituates the debate about porn, certainly away from a feminist stance against porn on the basis of its purported "objectification of women" and pandering to male privilege—a position which, she contends throughout, vastly simplifies porn's address and the psychic operations of fantasy it mobilizes. She positions her discussion away from debate centering on law or politics (such as defenses of

porn based on first amendment issues, or Catharine MacKinnon's legal arguments for redefining pornography not as speech but as action) to engage seriously the *cultural* dimensions of porn, and the ways in which pornographic representations affirm—and threaten—classed forms of subjectivity. Drawing especially from Peter Sallybrass and Allon White, Kipnis traces connections between aesthetic/cultural distinctions, social distinctions, and internal divisions within subjects: "The bourgeois subject has 'continually defined and redefined itself through the exclusion of what it marked out as low—as dirty, repulsive, noisy, contaminating. . . . [The] very act of exclusion was constitutive of its identity'." Forms of "delicacy and refinement," from the eighteenth century on, became "the very substance of bourgeois subjectivity," while certain bodily functions (e.g., sex, elimination) were relegated to the private sphere and/or "warehoused as the contents of the unconscious" ("Reading *Hustler*," 377). That porn—with its public representation of sex and bodies—would offend audience sensibilities starts to seem inevitable; Kipnis suggests that such a knee-jerk, class-conditioned response to porn often prevents productive analyses of porn's cultural work—not to mention that it can fuel an impulse to censor it altogether. A frequent tactic in her book is to critically examine particular polemical positions vis-à-vis pornography or popular culture (e.g., Allan Bloom's somewhat hysterical portrait of an oversexed popular cultural audience turned on by the "mental masturbation" of TV, or Robin Morgan's account of being offended by porn) and treat them as the articulations of unspoken identifications, desires, and fears—the product not of critical "detachment" but of subjective *investment*. Kipnis traces such investments in order to clear a space for the expression of Other desires and subjects: to counter the ways in which antiporn rhetorics (and elite critiques of popular culture) annex a discourse of shame to "whatever minute and mundane spheres of freedom embodied subjects can create for themselves" (*Bound and Gagged*, 188). Toward that end, Kipnis promotes a more complicated critical discourse about porn, especially among feminists who have frequently, she suggests, presented simplistic analyses but who would have much to gain from expanding the discussion.

Kipnis's argument about affect (and the class aspects of "feminist disgust") is foregrounded in her best-known (and quite brilliant) essay on porn, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*," first published in the landmark anthology *Cultural Studies* (1992) and reprinted in slightly revised form as chapter 4 in *Bound and Gagged*. Focusing on the most "low-brow" (and what she terms "class-antagonistic") of mass-circulation men's magazines, Kipnis examines *Hustler's* "politics of the body," its explicit pictorials and images of "improper bodies" (e.g., its emphasis on both male and female genitals, as well as images of pregnant women, middle-aged women, overweight women, hermaphrodites, amputees, pre-operative transsexuals, photo spreads on the consequences of venereal disease, and so on). "The *Hustler* body is an unromanticized body—no vaselined lenses or soft focus. . . . It's a body, not a surface or a suntan: insistently material, defiantly vulgar, corporeal. In fact, the *Hustler* body is often a gaseous, fluid-emitting, embarrassing body, one continually defying the strictures of bourgeois manners and mores. . . . *Hustler's* favorite joke is someone accidentally defecating in church" (375). Kipnis argues that *Hustler's* Rabelaisian exaggeration of the improper—its

"vulgarity" and "grossness" (evident in its pictorials as well as editorials, cartoons, and political humor), which at times translates into "scathingly effective political language—is an affront to middle-class forms of "taste" and subjectivity, a fact that can make its misogynist and anti-bourgeois impulses difficult to disentangle. As white, middle-class, academic feminist (part of what she describes as *Hustler's* "target audience," i.e., the implied object of many of its jokes), Kipnis's critical strategy is to distrust her own immediate impulse—to close the magazine in disgust—in the service of critical engagement, since she is "never quite sure whether this almost automatic response is one of feminist disgust or bourgeois disgust" (378). Interrogating "feminist disgust" as, in part, a class-conditioned response to porn, Kipnis situates her analysis in the feminist "sex wars," and argues, along with Gayle Rubin, that feminism, a discourse about gender, may not be the most effective or productive discourse for analyzing sexuality. In particular, Kipnis suggests that (middle-class) feminists' class biases can engender certain (unexamined, conservative) responses to porn—an argument that has been made, by Dorothy Allison and others, in terms of feminists' policing of sexual desires and practices such as S&M and butch-femme role playing. Since, Kipnis argues, "any gesture of disgust is not without a history and not without a class character . . . bourgeois disgust, even as mobilized against a sense of violation and violence to the female body, is not without a function in relation to class hegemony, and more than problematic in the context of what purports to be a radical social movement" (378). This is particularly problematic because the feminist anti-porn polemic—which hypostatizes certain forms of spectatorship (e.g., porn's courting of a "male gaze") and identification and insists "that all women are violated by pornography"—reinforces feminism's (middle-) class identification and erases class differences, as well as political alliances, among women (some of whom enjoy porn).

Kipnis's argument is wonderfully provocative and smart, and her book is fun to read. But its interpretations are uneven and, in the end, not entirely convincing. First, in terms of her polemic, it's important to emphasize that Kipnis focuses on certain subgenres of pornography at the "low" end of the low cultural divide, rather than the mainstream (what she terms "fuck and suck") variety, including magazines like *Penthouse* and *Playboy*. Her argument about porn's subversive display of repressed cultural and psychic materials makes little sense when considering such periodicals as *Playboy*, which studiously avoids the "lower bodily stratum." To what extent can we view such materials as publicizing the "cultural unconscious" when—as she herself points out—the types of bodies they represent, and the "tasteful" arrangement, display, and dressing (and undressing) of those bodies in their pages, are so similar to those splayed across billboards and fashion magazines throughout the country? It is, in fact, when considering such (mainstream) materials that the feminist critique of porn—and the "male fantasies" encoded within it—seems most convincing; Kipnis herself observes that porn offends feminists partly because it naturalizes certain forms of masculine sexuality and particularly a fiction of female sexual availability, or the view that male and female erotic fantasies and desires are identical. How might porn

limit, rather than promote, feminine erotic fantasy and freedom; given the economics of the porn industry (and economic inequality along gender lines in the culture at large), how might that be challenged in the service of a greater range of public fantasies? Also, Kipnis focuses on class (and the particular class identifications and subjects porn constitutes) at the expense of race—an omission that is particularly striking in relation to Lott's book (and his argument that forms of working-class subjectivity are structured by racial fantasy). This emphasis is characteristic of the critics and theorists most central to her project (e.g., Pierre Bourdieu, Stallybrass and White, Bakhtin, Norbert Elias), who examine class distinctions in relation to forms of "taste" and psychological "sensibility." But what would it mean to address the questions of affect central to her project in terms of race? If, as Lott argues, racial fantasy is central to working-class subject formation, in what ways is that process at work in porn? Finally, although the book is a defense of porn as an "expressive medium in the positive sense" and a register of erotic fantasy, it doesn't provide a very rich account of the "positive" meanings of porn and/or the fantasies it mobilizes among readers in different subject positions. The *Hustler* essay, for example, hypostatizes a certain antagonistic (binary) construction of porn's readers—its ideal reader and ideal target—as the working-class male and middle-class (academic, feminist) female. This lack of an adequate account of positive fantasies is partly a question of Kipnis's methodology: unlike cultural studies projects such as Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*, with its extensive interviewing of readers to identify and engage the "meanings" they create from popular materials, her study lacks the "thick description" of subjective accounts (with the notable exception of chapter 1). (Such a cross-class ethnographic study—involving, say, interviewing individual *Hustler* readers—would entail obvious methodological difficulties as well as, presumably, its own emotional trials.) But if porn's "positive" meanings aren't always particularized, Kipnis's theoretical and political arguments are an important intervention in contemporary debates. Her book is primarily a defense of the erotic imagination, and the multiple forms of desire and identification representations can mobilize. This view is shared by Dorothy Allison, whose collection of essays, *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class, and Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1993), came frequently to mind as I read Kipnis's book:

There is this notion that sex is separable from life, that pornography is not only debased and physically suspect, but easily recognizable. When women become fervently righteous about this subject, I want to ask them about their girlhood fantasies. Maybe they have red-lined their erotic imaginations since growing up, but what made them breathe hard when they were girls? [It's hard] to get people to think about—and harder still to talk about—the kind of erotic imagination that takes banal movies, hackneyed best-selling romances, and the most cliched television programs and constructs personally tailored sexual fantasies that are invariably more effective than most mass-marketed stroke books no matter how explicit. . . . The sexual is unpredictable, irrational, sneaky, and far-reaching. . . . Most sexual imagery does not have one

interpretation but a range of multilevel impacts depending on context, personal taste, and hidden symbolism.

Miami University

Lori Merish

Ghostlier Demarcations: Modern Poetry and the Material Word by Michael Davidson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. 280. \$35.00.

Criticism of modern American poetry has generally lagged behind that of the novel in developing terms toward a materialist understanding. Literary historians and Marxist theorists have long preferred the novel (and, more recently, film and video) as a privileged site for exploring what Frederic Jameson has called "the dialectic of Utopia and Ideology" in cultural texts. While American poetry critics have not ignored history entirely, they have tended to enact it in what Cary Nelson has described as a "celebratory chronological staging of the canon." Over the last decade, a number of critics including Nelson, Jerome McGann, and Johanna Drucker have challenged this prevailing model, seeking both to develop strong materialist readings of poetry and to demonstrate poetry's relevance for historical criticism. Michael Davidson's *Ghostlier Demarcations* continues this reformation, offering important readings of Gertrude Stein, George Oppen, Charles Olson, Charles Reznikoff, and Muriel Rukeyser and others in the "Objectivist continuum within modernism" as it advances an analysis of materiality in modern poetic texts. Objectivism refers, in addition to a literary movement codified by Louis Zukofsky in the 1930s, to "the idea of the poem as an entity, produced within other forms of materiality and performative with respect to language" (23). Davidson's book thus has a dual purpose: it proposes a specific material methodology for the history and criticism of American modernist poetry, and it seeks to demonstrate the political efficacy of this continuum (which has implications for contemporary poetic practice).

In his introduction, Davidson notes a striking parallel between Marx's image of the commodity's reification as a "phantasmagoria" or magic lantern and the same image as it circulates in modern poetic texts. The phantasmagoria becomes the "master trope of modernism," linking "two spheres of materiality: modes of mechanical reproduction (film, photography, sound recording) in which new subjectivities are produced and new public spaces in which these subjectivities are translated into social and ultimately political relations" (4). It also suggests a strategy of reading. Rather than simply challenging ideologies of disinterestedness and autonomy (of which poetry remains the primary figure), Davidson seeks to uncover how such ideologies emerge and are undermined in specific modern poems and histories of reading. His opening chapter on Gertrude Stein thus argues that "Stein's transformation into a mass-culture object, far from representing a vulgarization of her more 'serious,' artistic side, is a logical component of it, an inevitable result of developing an aesthetics that rejects the world by creating another to replace it" (37). Focusing on Stein's "difficult" texts (including *Tender Buttons*, "Patriarchal Poetry," and *Stanzas in Meditation*), Davidson argues that Stein

"made difficult the occasion or site in which to interrogate the limits of commodification" (41). The particular readings this chapter offers concentrate on formal devices such as repetition and Stein's use of pronouns to show that "Stein made language hard to consume" (63). Subtle and often fruitful, these readings demonstrate in Stein's texts a persistent engagement with consumerism that could be called "feminist." But they depart from previous feminist criticism of Stein both in their explicit refusal of biographical analysis (because such readings "domesticate her obscurity and render its critical potential less threatening"; 37) and their attempt (not entirely successful) to confirm a unity between her "abstract" and "explanatory" works.

The Stein chapter is relatively anomalous in *Ghostlier Demarcations* by treating materiality mainly as a rhetorical issue (a view elsewhere critiqued as inadequate; 79). Although Stein is important to Davidson as an avenue into the dynamics of literary idealization that are his partial object, textual material in his preferred terms emerges only in brief references to Stein's notebooks. Other chapters focus more specifically on the histories behind the composition of poetic texts. In "Dismantling 'Mantis,'" on Louis Zukofsky, Davidson reads Zukofsky's engagement with Marx's theory of value in two short poems—"Mantis" and "'Mantis,' an Interpretation"—and in "A"-9, a crucial turning point in his long life-work "A." As in the chapter on Stein, Davidson is here concerned with the relationship between formal abstraction and political use. This relationship in Zukofsky's formally overloaded poems has been misperceived by previous critics, Davidson argues, as a contradiction, when it should actually be viewed as "an immanent critique within the terms of modernism itself" (118). "Mantis" and the first half of "A"-9 both present Marxian ideas in overwhelmingly complex formal structures, while "'Mantis,' an Interpretation" and the second half of "A"-9 (composed eight years after the first half) critique the pretense of the earlier works. Zukofsky's poetic practice here "exposes the object-status of the poem as a delusion, a stoppage of what is, in reality, a dynamic process" (117). The specific reading of "Mantis" here is probably the most compelling in Zukofsky criticism, but as with Davidson's treatment of Stein, the tendency to unify Zukofsky's work as a single authorial project (with "A"-9, often seen as a crucial break in Zukofsky's work, here represented as a connecting hinge) sits oddly within a critical history identified as materialist.

Indeed, perhaps more than the phantasmagoria itself, authorial presence haunts *Ghostlier Demarcations*. Davidson's final chapter, "Technologies of Presence: Orality and the Tapevoice of Contemporary Poetics," investigates the use of recording technology in the work of several contemporary performance poets. Sandwiched between an analysis of a radio performance by "talk poet" David Antin and a brilliant explication of the relationship between performance and text in the work of Steve Benson (a poet associated with "language" writing) is a celebratory discussion of Laurie Anderson's *United States*. This brief essay notes the various forms in which her work appears (performance, CD, video, book), but its focus on strategies of rhetorical and technical production completely ignores the problematic of reception raised not only by this diversity of form but also by the "celebrity" status of its author (an issue also ignored in Davidson's discussion of Allen Ginsberg). A more productive haunting occurs in the preface and the moving afterward,

where elements of Davidson's biography (possible loss of hearing) both ground the work and provoke him to contemplate the limitations of any discussion of poetry that take "the self-evident status of acoustic space" for granted, given the actual vulnerability of "a body prior to speech, a tympanum on which socially significant messages can be sounded" (228).

I noted above that one of the objects of *Ghostlier Demarcations* is to provide new ways of reading the "material word" of modern poetry. Theoretical advances tend to produce their own vocabulary, and the one neologism here is the *palimtext*. As defined in an essay on the late-modernist George Oppen and contemporary poet Susan Howe, the palimtext "is neither genre nor object but a writing-in-process. As its name implies, the palimtext retains vestiges of prior inscriptions out of which it emerges. Or, more accurately, it is the still-visible record of its responses to those earlier writings" (68). Oppen provides the ideal source for the discussion of these issues, since his "archive" includes manuscript pages "onto which new lines or stanzas have been glued so that the revised draft seems to rise vertically off the page in a kind of thick, textual impasto" (77). Howe's work, though not examined in manuscript form, virtually thematizes the palimtext in its visual "overwriting" of previous works and their own material conditions. The San Francisco poet Robert Duncan (whom Davidson examined at length in his previous critical book, *The San Francisco Renaissance*) wrote an entire poem-sequence in the margins of Thom Gunn's book *Moly*. Duncan's sequence, discussed in its own chapter, likewise illustrates the operations of the palimtext, since the organization of Gunn's book determines not only the subject of Duncan's improvisations but also such issues as line length and length of poem. Indeed, the Duncan chapter enacts the fullest realization of Davidson's palimtextual reading strategy, providing a unification of biography and material textuality that seems unforced. It will be crucial to future readings of Duncan, Gunn, and recent gay poetry in general.

As Davidson remarks in his introduction, "If the palimtext is a description of the modern era, it is also a memorial to its passing" (33). The age of mechanical reproduction made possible the investigation of the archive that grounds Davidson's readings, but the age of digital reproduction (which challenges Davidson's assertion that the growth of the poem "begins and ends on a page"; 69) may make similar studies of contemporary poets less and less possible. The increasing turn to digitization, Davidson suggests, may dematerialize the poem again, re-obscuring the relationship between aesthetic and social materiality. But Davidson's preferred investigative vector—from the published poem back to the manuscript collection—is not the only one possible (as Davidson recognizes from time to time), and seems informed by a limited notion of what constitutes the "archive." What happens to poems after they are published is at least as important as how they are constructed. Still, *Ghostlier Demarcations* is a crucial reading of tradition in modern American poetry that continues to produce some of the most important contemporary poetic writing.

The Language of Twentieth-Century Art: A Conceptual History by Paul Crowther. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. Pp. 251. \$35.00.

The Language of Twentieth-Century Art is the third of Paul Crowther's ambitious four-volume series "addressing the interrelation of art, philosophy, experience, and history." In the more philosophical of the two earlier volumes, *Art and Embodiment*, Crowther laid out an account of art as expressing our most fundamental relations to the world as irreducibly embodied and marked by finitude. Crowther reconstructs Kant's account of aesthetic judgment to show how art both consummates the perceptual and cognitive capacities of finite rational beings, and restores a sense of reciprocity between the embodied subject and the world—a reciprocity which is unacknowledged in everyday routines, in the unfettered employment of the understanding and reason, and in the instrumental rationality characteristic of modernity. Crowther then places this reconstructed Kantian understanding of art within a broader account of embodiment derived from Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Though subject to indeterminately open-ended social and historical variation, embodied subjectivity is nonetheless structured around certain invariants, including both corporeal schema organized by oppositions such as inside/outside, close/distant, and foreground/background, and the needs of self-consciousness, which Crowther characterizes in a Hegelian manner as "the needs to externalize oneself, to achieve recognition from the Other, and self-recognition through the Other."

In the other earlier volume, *Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism*, Crowther relates these transhistorical needs of embodied self-consciousness to the specifically modern character of experience. Drawing broadly from Walter Benjamin, Crowther argues that the social predominance of techniques of mechanical reproduction in modernity leads to a "mode of direct appropriation" toward the world, and a widespread diminishment of our sense of the world's transcendence—that is, of the sense that there is always something more to be perceived or known in any experience—in a levelling of the sense of the uniqueness of the passing moment. To this tendency to level concrete uniqueness into mechanically reproducible models, postmodern experience adds the profusion of such models, resulting in a general imperative for "manic conformity." As with the ontological level addressed in *Art and Embodiment*, the remedy for this sociohistorical condition is an art cultivating shock effects, in a manner responsive to two reconstructed Kantian imperatives: 1) that the work be understood through the Kantian conception of the mathematical sublime as involving "some perceptibly or imaginatively overwhelming aspect of the phenomenal world" in a way that makes "vivid the superiority of our rational being"; and 2) that the work be original, in the sense of significantly refining inherited styles and means of depiction, or of instantiating such new modes. An original work cannot be in Kant's phrase "original nonsense," but rather must be exemplary, providing a model for further artworks.

It is the latter imperative that guides Crowther's investigation into twentieth-century art in his new volume. What distinguishes his "conceptual history" from the empirical history of art historians is his focus on precisely those aspects of the major art movements that are not unique to individual

artists or movements, but which take on transcontextual significance as models of further works. Further, from his account of art's transhistorical basis in embodied self-consciousness, he argues that it is precisely those features of transcontextual significance that most fully satisfy the needs of self-consciousness in the twentieth century.

The Language of Twentieth-Century Art is then divided into three sections. The first presents Crowther's argument for the need for a distinctively conceptual history of art, as well as a general argument for linking pictorial conventions with the needs of self-consciousness and embodiment generally. The second consists of studies of major twentieth-century artists and aesthetic movements and focuses on the interaction between the philosophical influences and ideas of the artists and the innovations in pictorial convention that they motivate. The third discusses Jean Baudrillard as a key ideologist of tendencies in contemporary art that might seem to contravene Crowther's account, and provides an alternative construal of artists such as Andy Warhol and Peter Halley whose work seems initially resistant to Crowther's concern with embodied transhistorical features of art. In addition, Crowther briefly considers some contemporary artists who best advance his conception of art, including Ian Hamilton Finlay and Malcolm Morley, as well as lesser known artists like the British installation artists Cornelia Parker and the Slovenian painter Mojka Oblak.

Crowther approaches the conceptual and transcontextual aspects of twentieth-century art through the structural determination of language and sign systems generally that Derrida has termed "iterability." For a sign to be a sign and not, say, a unique particular, it must be repeatable and recognizable in different contexts and, if it is a referring term, in the absence of its referent. Lacking this capacity for recognition in repetition, or iterability, the sign could convey no sharable meaning. Iterability and the field of rules and regulations that govern the meaningfulness of signs mutually presuppose each other. In the Merleau-Pontyian account of embodiment upon which Crowther relies here, the stable meaning of signs itself presupposed embodied subjects whose ongoing meaning making involves the reciprocal determination of new instances of meaning and existing conventions of signification. This reciprocal determination Crowther calls "the principle of reciprocity," whose ongoing effective operation itself presupposes the most basic feature of finite embodiment, the achieved correlation of the capacities of the human body and the deliverances of the surrounding world, or "ontological reciprocity." Presumably because modernism's demand for pictorial innovation results in works that are both unintelligible in terms of prior conventions yet which themselves come to provide models for further works, Crowther suggests that the principle of reciprocity itself is the iterable basis of the transhistorical aspects of twentieth-century art. Correlatively, he sees the key historical break in artistic conventions not, as many do, in Baudelaire's reworking of traditional aesthetic categories in light of the dissolution of premodern horizons of experience and expectation, nor more formally in Manet's assertion of the flatness and artificiality of the picture plane, but rather in cubism and early abstraction, which shift the referential "aboutness" of an artistic term or figure from an object or situation to the principle of reciprocity itself.

Crowther claims that his general approach could be developed either phenomenologically, through a "mapping of diachronic and synchronic continuities" at the level of their appearance for a viewer, or conceptually, through a consideration of the "visual outcomes" of key artists' working through philosophical concepts expressing some aspect of reciprocity. His choice of the latter approach gives the second section of the book a peculiar character. The philosophical influences taken up in cubism and futurism, and by Mondrian, Malevich, Breton, Pollock, and Newman are each precisely explicated, and the results of their artistic working through are described as iterable exemplifications of some aspect of reciprocity. But the aspect of the philosophical ideas that is in fact iterable always turns out to be only a quite restricted dimension of the full philosophical position. One wonders why, if Crowther intends to explicate the language of twentieth-century art, the elaborate description of its encompassing philosophies is needed. Nonetheless, Crowther presents a sharply insightful account of the trajectory of analytic cubism as a development and intensification of implications of Cézanne's late style in the service of exemplifying a hitherto unprecedented intimacy of a "total encounter" with objects through the replacement of traditional optically organized space with a more tactile spatiality. This "more all-embracing relation between artists and subject matter" is cubism's iterable reference to reciprocity. As such, it forms the conceptual basis of succeeding artistic movements, and its great generality incites later artists to specify reciprocity in more determinate ways.

Crowther never explicates what he means by "conceptual," but the term must mean something like those transcontextually available aspects of convention that, at least for modern art, lend themselves to expressing reciprocity and the needs of embodied self-consciousness. Such aspects need not, and perhaps cannot, be fully expressed propositionally. So Crowther's sense of the conceptual overlaps with Pierre Bourdieu's conception of habitus, understood as a transferrable, pragmatically organized set of durable dispositions, except that Crowther restricts his term to expressions of self-consciousness and explicitly disallows its reductivist employment.

The studies of later artists focus more specifically on the philosophers taken up by the artists. Perhaps the most illuminating of these is Crowther's account of Breton's rethinking of ideas from Hegel and Engels. Not only does Crowther correct the exaggeration of the role of Freud in recent studies of surrealism such as Hal Foster's, but he also indicates the importance of twentieth-century art for interpreting the cultural response to the limitations of the self-understanding of the line of Enlightenment thinkers culminating in Hegel. For Crowther, as for many thinkers since Schelling, the key problem with Hegel's system is its claim to completeness, which seems to deny contingency, as well as the possibility of rational thought's relation to something irreducibly other; Spirit only ever knows itself. Although this may not be fully adequate as an interpretation of Hegel, it undoubtedly captures part of Hegel's self-understanding and his legacy. Breton develops surrealism as an appropriation of the dialectical aspect of Hegel's thought, understood as thought's ceaseless positing and overcoming of antinomies only partially expressive of its self-understanding. But Breton's focus on overcoming the specific contradiction between dream and waking states preserves art's relation

to the world's automatism and mystery, which remain outside the Hegelian system. This orientation constitutes the iterable dimension of surrealism, as well as allows it to serve as a precursor, albeit "crude," to the Merleau-Pontyan existentialist philosophy that most fully expresses reciprocity.

In the final section Crowther focuses on contemporary art. In accordance with his theory, he takes the most exemplary contemporary work to be that which most fully instantiates reciprocity while most directly engaging the specific character of the present. Crowther diagnoses this character as the deconstructive sensibility, whose core insight is that meaning is never simply present or given but rather always involves "a complex relation among signs, the world and broader fields of signification." The art form most fully exemplifying these concerns is the art of installation or assemblage, which foregrounds the contingent, ephemeral, but meaningful configuration of distinct elements. Crowther calls for an art of "transcendental mannerism," as developed by Oblak, to satisfy such contemporary needs. Such art is "transcendental" in the sense of Kant's transcendental ideas—as-if constructions whose validity cannot be determined but that allow knowledge to advance by enjoining regulative foci of interest and coherence. Such an art acknowledges the contingency of its own starting point; there is no compelling reason to paint one motif in one style rather than another in another. The starting point is developed systematically in "a rule-governed but experimental way," thereby exemplifying the reciprocity of contingency and necessity. Such an art accepts the deconstructivist sensibility while exemplifying various aspects of reciprocity; it is properly judged in terms of its capacity to illuminate features of its implied context.

Crowther's project represents, I think, the most philosophically powerful current account of contemporary art. With a wealth of original argumentation and insights he combines the motifs in contemporary philosophy of art which motivate the ongoing recovery of the significance of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* with a sophisticated Merleau-Pontyan philosophy of embodied self-consciousness, and provides a distinctive account of twentieth-century art that is of great explanatory value. But the peculiarity of his choice of access to twentieth-century art through iterable aspects of largely philosophical views raises questions. First, it's not clear why Crowther focuses on the specifically philosophical influences on artists. On his own account, philosophical ideas played little role in cubism's development of a new conception of space and encounter. But, as noted above, his later chapters give extended accounts of philosophers only to end on the disappointing note that little of the philosophy was worked into the iterable basis of the emergent conventions of depiction. Combined with Crowther's choice not to give a phenomenological account of the works themselves, this method leads to a quite thin account of the artists and movements considered. Since Crowther considers complex historical mediations to be noniterable, at least in modernity, only such a phenomenological account would be available to supply some sense of the uniqueness of the works. A second problem stems from Crowther's stark contrast between transhistorical and context-specific features. He focuses on the transhistorical as part of an attempt to account for the enduring significance of works. Yet one wonders how Crowther could account for the decay of traditions and their exemplary works. Presumably he would claim that original

exemplification of the principle of embodiment is a necessary but insufficient condition for the availability of a work. But such a claim seems to ascribe a kind of foundationalist status to the philosophy of embodiment, which would violate the post-Hegelian conditions of acceptable scope of philosophical claims. That is, it's hard to see how Crowther can maintain a particular judgment of transhistorical status without presupposing the transhistorical validity of his philosophy.

These two questions concerning the thinness of his conceptual account and the lack of a consideration of historical dynamics of traditions lead to a third: Can one simply take the iterable basis of modern art to be the principle of reciprocity, or might there be some further factor which, though hardly transhistorical, might account for the art's continued existential significance? One thinks here in particular of Theodor Adorno's account, which takes modern art's resistance to routinization and commodification to be evidenced in its enigmatic quality, its opacity to meaning, and tendency toward internal fragmentation. While Adorno at times construes enigma as something like a transhistorical aspect of art, the latter two characteristics can hardly be thought so; yet they are part of what characterizes modern art as a whole and arguably are part of what gives such art its continued significance. Neither seems intelligible as simply an indirect expression of the principle of reciprocity. What is lacking here is an account that can illuminate the initial and ongoing motivations for abstraction in the arts. Crowther would not, of course, claim that artists were motivated to realize proleptically Merleau-Ponty's philosophy; instead he would presumably claim that twentieth-century artists were exploring and illuminating historically contingent features of embodiment. But this does not explain the artists' move to abstraction instead of, say, further refinements of existing conventions. Some sort of explanation at the level of Adorno's account is needed. These questions suggest that Crowther needs a thicker conception of modern art than that provided by reference to reciprocity. In any case, one cannot but eagerly await the final volume for Crowther's full discussion.

University of California, Berkeley

John Rapko