Criticism

Volume 39 | Issue 3 Article 6

1997

Book Reviews

Criticism Editors

Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter by Gillian Beer. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Pp. x + 341; 6 illustrations; index. $45.00.

The fourteen chapters of this volume are all reprints of previously published articles or book chapters that appeared over a roughly seven-year span—from the publication of the seminal volume *One Culture*, edited by George Levine (Beer's Chapter 7), to the publication of *Ambix*, 41 (March 1994 [Beer's Chapter 14]). Despite their various origins, the essays do hold up as a collection, in large measure because Beer frames them astutely as "all concern[ing] the crossings we make as readers between fields (sometimes, it seems, on open ground or over stiles, sometimes crouching behind barbed wire or plucked by brambles)" (1). The particular strength of Beer's *Open Fields*, as the title and the metaphorical exfoliation cited above suggest, is in her categorical unwillingness to permit any consideration of the epistemological without simultaneously considering the ontological. One comes to know what s/he knows by traversing—and in the process, negotiating—cultural spaces that mediate, and ultimately transform what s/he knows. This process holds true no less for the scientist coming to do science than for the novelist coming to do fiction.

Beer's focal interest, therefore, is on the subject position, and specifically on "the *intimacy* between intellectual issues and emotional desires and fears" (8). While providing her with an horizon adequate to engaging the texts she selects, Beer's focus raises two questions, that to her own mind "haunt this collection of essays: How does human encounter, actual or imagined, play into the making of theory? How do people reach new ideas within language, which is so freighted with communal pasts? Together, these raise further questions: about scientific writing and the depth to which it is imbued with cultural experience; about the capacity of human beings to respond to fresh knowledge as experience" (9).

As befits the author of *Darwin's Plots* (1983), the first section, containing six of the fourteen essays collected—nearly half of the present volume—concerns itself with "Darwinian Encounters." The first essay, "Four Bodies on the *Beagle*: Touch, Sight, and Writing in a Darwinian Letter," focuses on a letter by Darwin "addressed to his school and college friend Charles Whitley" (21). The letter contains a puzzling passage that links Darwin, as writerly body, with the body of a Fuegian, who gazes at him; with the body of Titian's Venus (i.e., *Venus and Cupid with a Lute-Player*), who gazes sidelong out of the picture plane; and with the body of a "small animal," gazeless because dead (presumably, shot by Darwin himself), that Darwin envisions eviscerating to prepare as a zoological specimen. Beer reads the passage as attempting to mediate Darwin's "sense of fascinated helplessness at finding himself unable to interpret the profound difference of the other man (i.e., the Fuegian)" (25). In his state of helplessness, Darwin recalls the other bodies as a way of trying out an erotics of interpretation versus an adversative struggle of interpretation, ultimately writing himself into a state in which the gaze is averted; the pleasure of the gaze, subverted; the subject, disembodied; and his subject-matter, unsexed.

In the second essay, "Can the Native Return?" Beer turns the Victorian engagement with the idea of progress upside down, making a start out of

the question begged by Clym Yeobright's actions in Hardy's *Return of the Native* (1878): Can the Native return? Relying on various accounts of what followed upon Captain Fitzroy's return of the native Fuegians Jemmy Button, York Minster, and Fuegia Basket to their homeland, then turning to Sir John Franklin's last Arctic expedition (1846), Beer sees these texts, along with the researches of Dorset poet and linguist William Barnes, as both underwriting the question and overdetermining its answer. "In Hardy's imagination, as in that of other Victorian writers, return is not possible without the idea of retrogression" (53).

In the third and fourth essays, "Travelling the Other Way: Travel Narratives and Truth Claims," and "Speaking for the Others: Relativism and Authority in Victorian Anthropological Writing," Beer concerns herself with the way that the cultural practices typified by the travel narrative and anthropological writing in the first half of the nineteenth century had two simultaneous and related effects: remarking the otherness of the object of the discourse, while at the same time marginalizing that object by deploying that otherness against the cultural backdrop of the British upper classes. Since the third essay focuses principally on the 1830s, it does not address what happened in the second half of the century; however, the fourth essay argues that in the second half of the century, writers as diverse as Henry Mayhew, writing in *London Labour and the London Poor*, and Robert Browning, writing in "Caliban upon Setebos," attempted to interrupt "that equable, overbearing conversation among peers," and "to listen to other voices, beneath and beyond those of the dominant interpreters. . ." (81).

Beer's fifth essay, "Darwin and the Growth of Language Theory," revisits the significance of Darwin's early reading—and, above all, of his *Origin of Species*—in the debate between the essentialists and the developmentalists regarding how language originates and changes through time. A student of language theory—by the 1830s he had already read Locke, Dugald Stewart, Monboddo, Horne Tooke, Brougham, and Hensleigh Wedgwood, among others—Darwin "uses linguistic theory . . . not only as a metaphor but also as an *example*, an 'illustration' of evolutionary processes" (102). Language is, in other words, among those species-specific but evolved behaviors that we inherit. But as a natural historian with field experience, Darwin knew that while a theory might be complete, the evidence attesting it could at best be only incomplete, owing to the fact that the very natural processes of which one speaks have worked unremittingly to efface some of that evidence. Accordingly, Darwin transposes natural theology's "old idea of 'the book of nature' into a new historical register, emphasizing the book as 'a history of the world,' a history whose script and language itself changes over time, and, furthermore, he describes it as a document which is itself a physically damaged product of historical change, now tattered and incomplete, with pages and whole chapters missing" (109). Although linguistics and evolutionary theory parted discursive ways toward the end of the nineteenth century, the rise of interest in animal communication—above all, the engagement with the question of whether animals either have language or can be made to have it under certain circumstances—has brought the two fields together again in the context of the debate over whether language is a unique attribute of humanity resulting from its unique creation, or whether language is

an evolved form of communication already evident in the hominids who precede humanity in the evolutionary chain.

In her sixth chapter, "Forging the Missing Link," Beer analyzes Victorian cultural coding, exploring "some of the ways in which the idea of 'the missing link' functioned . . . not only in the manifest context of palaentology and evolutionary theory but in the implications it bore for race and class, and sometimes gender" (119). Looking at cultural sources as diverse as Darwinian evolutionary theory, P. T. Barnum's fabricated remains of a mermaid, cartoons culled from *Punch*, and Browning's poetry, Beer concludes that "The fear disguised" in the fascination with the possibility that such a creature existed "was not, in the end, of otherness but of *sameness*: the 'other of social class, or racial theory, or primate life, might prove to be indistinguishable from those who set out to describe it" (145).

The next three essays, gathered under the rubric "Description and Allusion in Scientific Writing," focus rather more closely than the previous six do on the actual literary techniques of written Victorian scientific discourse.

The seventh chapter, "Problems of Description in the Language of Discovery," ranges widely, from Wordsworth's 1802 "Preface" to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads* to Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1967), with intermediate landing places in texts such as Claude Bernard's *Introduction a l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*; James Clerk Maxwell's "Molecules" (1873); Ernst Mach's *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical* (1914); Leonard Bloomfield's *Linguistic Aspects of Science* (1939); and Steven Rose, Leon Kamin, and R. C. Lewontin's *Not in Our Genes* (1984). Beer astutely sees the conventions of scientific writing as bespeaking "tacit agreements with a projected readership that literature evades," to the end "that the shifting of linguistic levels has notably different functions in literary and scientific communication" (149-50).

To put the case in terms that Beer might have used but did not, the control of linguistic levels in scientific writing serves to marginalize the amateur, the figure who Michel Serres, writing in *Hermes* (1984) views as the personification of noise, in the information-theory sense of that term. But with the amateur excluded, "scientific writers move across levels of language and reference," to the end that "the apparent autonomy and neutrality of description are shaken" (160). The move that dare not speak its name is none other than metabasis, or the category mistake, as discussed by Amos Funkenstein, writing in *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (1986). It is only by means of metabasis, Funkenstein argues, that Galileo, Descartes, Newton, *et al.* are able to render nature accessible in reading her book. Autonomy and neutrality are not the goals of the poet or novelist, however, and what is feared by the scientist as metabasis is welcomed by the imaginative writer as metalepsis. When Pynchon's Nefastis, speaking of Maxwell's Demon among other things, tells Oedipa Maas that "Entropy is a figure of speech . . . a metaphor," connecting "the world of thermodynamics to the world of information now" (qtd., 167), he does not have it quite right. *Entropy* in this context is a metaphor for metaphor—metalepsis, in other words. In the final analysis, the distinction re-enacts the struggle between the lumpers (poets and novelists) and the splitters (scientists). In Beer's more elegant formulation, "Distrust of the simultaneity

of reading levels distinguishes scientific discourse from other forms of creative writing" (170). Such distrust duly noted, however, scientists and other creative writers face the same threat of language reifying the categories of the known that Shelley noted in *A Defence of Poetry*. To give Beer the last word here: "The utmost resourcefulness and probity of language are needed, both by scientists and poets, to outwit the tendency of description to stabilize a foreknown world and curtail discovery." Yet "scientists need to have recourse to . . . the instability of reference, with which literary language recognizes multiple simultaneous levels of event and meaning" (172).

"Translation or Transformation?: The Relations of Literature and Science," the eighth chapter, anticipates Gross and Levitt's *Higher Superstition* (1994) by nearly five years. Beer's thoroughgoing acquaintance with the literary-scientific relations of the Victorian era leads her quickly to grasp the fact that one comes to science, especially if he is a mid-nineteenth-century male, with the cultural endowments of the "mother-tongue," consisting of the glorious moments of written English of all genres, and of the "father-tongue" (175), consisting of the glorious moments of the written classical languages. These texts in common, far from endowing Victorian thinkers of the upper classes with a common ontology, because of the ways in which they were taken up, actually left those thinkers with ontological commitments in conflict. Science, especially "big science" at it grew throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, strove to marginalize the ontological component of the narrative. Its "workers strove to contain their procedures within a single epistemological frame," thus denying the "variety of conflicted epistemologies" (176) that each individual ontological narrative gives rise to. So it seemed that in 1989, the time at which Beer put forward her position, it had at least the partial result of constraining scientists to accept "the risks of uncontrolled reception," underwritten by "an international system of intertextuality" (195). But not for long: "The questioning of meaning in (and across) science and literature," while the activity never sought the "reconciliation" (196) that Beer cautions against, did eventuate an angry backlash against science studies by self-proclaimed concerned scientists.

Beer's ninth chapter, "Parable, Professionalization, and Literary Allusion in Victorian Scientific Writing," looks at the genre in question as being rather more conclusively shaped by assumptions about the class of the writer and the class of his (emphatically, *his*) audience, and by the need for such discourse to function as a social gatekeeper of sorts, than by the subject matter of the discourse per se. "The language available alike to nineteenth-century creative writers and scientists," Beer's "mother-tongue," "had been forged out of past literature, the Bible, philosophy, natural theology" (206). Far from being free-standing or heterogeneous discourses, all of these shared a wordhoard and common social assumptions alike, and these in their turn led to what E. P. Thompson has called "key-words" which, like their metaphoric original, keystones, operate strategically in shaping and sustaining a given social fabric. Tracking the threat of metabasis (and inherent threat of subversion) that these words pose across time and context, Beer observes, "Keywords . . . began to flee across categories: 'tissue,' as body, clothing, argument; property, as possession and characteristics; fact, as stable observation and act accomplished" (207). In the hands of a scientist such as Max-

well, who mobilizes the "mother-tongue" and the "father-tongue" with equal aplomb, not to mention Milton, the most famous progeny of these parents, the richness verges on the chaotic. Chaos theory is not far to seek. The parable and allusion of the title "not only worked as tactic and resource in Victorian scientific writing. They could also harbour anxieties and insights that tapped the further implications of current scientific theories, beyond the range for which experiment could vouch" (215).

The next four essays, gathered under the rubric "Victorian Physics and Futures," survey the social and intellectual reception of mid- and late-nineteenth-century physical theory. "'The Death of the Sun': Victorian Solar Physics and Solar Myth," Beer's tenth chapter, shows how a mistaken application of the Second Law of Thermodynamics caused a rift between physicists, on the one hand, and geologists and Darwinians, on the other. The mistake lay not with the assumption that the heat emanating from the sun tends toward that condition of uniform distribution known as entropy, but in the assumption, championed by William Thomson (subsequently Lord Kelvin) that the sun's heat resulted from combustion or some other chemical process then already observable under laboratory conditions. According to Thomson's calculations, given "the rate of dissipation of energy from the sun's source . . . there could not have been sufficient time for Darwinian evolutionary processes to have taken place" (221), nor could there have been time for the uniformitarian development of the earth's geology championed by Lyell. Moreover, there was not much time left, according to Thomson.

The prospects underwritten by Thomson's position were grim indeed. Beer cites a frightening dream recounted in Frances Powers Cobbe's *Darwinism in Morals* (1872), having to do with the disappearance of the sun. No less frightening is Richard Proctor's chapter on "Suns in Flames" in *Myths and Marvels of Astronomy* (1878). During this period, Max Müller, in his *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion* (1878), situated the sun as the centering object to which mythic systems and the religions that valorize them are all responses, thereby heightening the collective sense of how much was at stake in this discussion. Beer notes correctly that the "half-formulated anxieties" about the sun's impending extinction "worked . . . to generate much imaginative thought and production" (225), a point also made in 1989, the year in which Beer's chapter first appeared, by Peter Allan Dale in his *In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture*. Beer and Dale overlap, in fact, in their discussions of Hardy and George Eliot. What distinguishes Beer's treatment of this moment of crisis in Victorian culture is her concluding focus on some of the recuperative strategies mobilized by the principals in this discussion, Darwin among them. His *The Formation of Vegetable Mould, Through the Action of Worms, with Observations on Their Habits* (1881) presents the common earthworm as the symbol of the "[C]ontinuity [that] persists through change. Out of reach of the sun, whose energy is running down, the worm survives, blind and damp, perfectly at home within its limited environment, surviving amid more and more complex forms—and also surviving after them. Worms are the meek of the earth" (238).

The eleventh chapter, "Helmholtz, Tyndall, Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Prepared Imagination," is an attempt, following the line of argument embarked upon by Tom Zaniello in *Hopkins in the Age of Darwin* (1988), to

sketch out the oppositions that such an imagination must mediate. While Zaniello's focus is primarily on natural history and geology, Beer's, as the other two principals named in her title suggests, is physics, as that science contributes to "the force of scientific discovery and speculation within Hopkins's poetry, both in its sense and sound" (243). Hopkins, as Beer notes, "was increasingly fascinated by scientific issues . . . under discussion in the field of physics" (245). But as an ordained Roman Catholic priest and a member of the Jesuit order, Hopkins was a case-in-point of the uneasy status of "sense-experience[, which] seeks an intelligible form in science, a sacralized in religion: the two patterns for the Victorians sometimes cohere, sometimes lurch apart" (244).

Cohere or lurch apart as they might, the primary sources for the scientific half of "the two patterns" were Hermann Helmholtz and his disciple and popularizer, John Tyndall. Beer identifies Helmholtz's texts on physiological acoustics, such as *On the Sensation of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* (1863; tr. 1877), and on physiological optics, such as the three-volume *Physiological Optics* (1856-67), as particularly influential. "By the 1870's," according to Beer, "Helmholtz is, with Darwin, the recurrent point of reference for writers in *Nature* and *Mind*, where the weight of his presence is felt within many diverse arguments" (247). Nor was that influence restricted to scientific journals only. Helmholtz's researches were as likely to be discussed in *The Fortnightly Review* as *Nature* or *Mind*. The significance of Helmholtz, as well as of his friend Tyndall, lay in the impact of his physiologically based theories on the validity of arguments from design resting on the covert assumption of an anthropomorphic creator-God. The challenge to belief was much as it had been in the Rome of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the age of Bruno and Galileo. Indeed, in his Belfast Address, Tyndall made pointed reference to Bruno as someone who, early on, concluded "that Nature in her productions does not imitate the technic of man" (qtd., 259).

In the face of Tyndall's materialism and the physiological researches of Helmholtz on which it rested, Hopkins, along with other poets such as William Barnes, and scientists such as James Clerk Maxwell, undertook an archaeology of language. Hopkins's purpose in studying the history and philology of English was to recuperate the religious dimension of everyday lived experience that the language, by reason of its development and its use by expositors such as Tyndall, tends to resist, even though, as Beer notes, "his views temptingly ran alongside the religious, even while they repudiated religious authority" (260). That Hopkins's was ultimately a losing linguistic as well as theological "search for an expression that can keep control and encompass the unravelling of the world in his own life, in the universe" (271) is made pointedly by Beer's observation that Hopkins's letters to *Nature* all concern the sunset (271)—and, by implication, the dark night of the soul to follow. But in the sense that he did not go gentle but instead raged against the dying of the light, Hopkins was perhaps even more the modern poet than the circumstance of a belatedly posthumous first volume appearing in 1918 has led us to believe.

"The Reader's Wager: Lots, Sorts, and Futures," Beer's twelfth chapter, makes a start out of considering Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988) and

ranges widely through English and American fiction—from Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) to Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in Ten and a Half Chapters* (1989)—to explore both the thematization of gambling in late-nineteenth-century British fiction and the way that this fiction draws the reader in, making her/him an interpretive gambler in the bargain. Particularly acute is Beer's observation, corroborated by Ian Stewart's observations in *Does God Play Dice?: The Mathematics of Chaos* (1989), that even the most comprehensive explanation of observed phenomena—evolutionary theory or thermodynamics, for example—is far from acting as a deterministic engine, and may in fact give rise to "unforseeable (and yet predicted) conclusion[s]. . ." (277).

The inability to predict the future, when combined with the gradual but marked recession of a superintendent theodicy, made gambling into one of those symbolic behaviors by means of which the late-nineteenth-century subject played at being at ease in the world by controlling its outcomes. Beer usefully compares the hazarding of wagers in gaming with the hazarding by an infant of the familiar object in Freud's "*fort-da*" game (284). Ultimately, Beer reaches an unforseeable and yet predictable conclusion of her own in a discussion of Stefan Zweig's "Twenty-Four Hours in a Woman's Life," which appeared in *Stories and Legends* (1927), and Hardy's *The Return of the Native*. If, as Beer says in discussing the latter, gambling gratifies an "antique yearning . . . the longing for disaster, the full but fictive experience of obliteration" (294), then there is a third term to consider in analyzing the tensions and interplay between *eros* and *thanatos*, one that at once mediates and precipitates both of these: *Spieltrieb*.

"Wave Theory and the Rise of Literary Modernism," the thirteenth chapter, looks at the fate of literary realism in the framework of "a single example, that of James Clerk Maxwell," in order "to illustrate . . . the restiveness about representation in the later nineteenth century—a restiveness shared, and crossing to and fro, between physicists, philosophers, and poets" (296-97). The issue lay not so much with the wave model itself. As Beer notes, the educated read Heraclitus, Lucretius, and Ovid, and were accordingly familiar with the analysis that postulates all of what the subject perceives as the result of matter in wavelike flux or motion. Moreover, these same readers were aware that the absence of motion, whether resulting from the entropic equilibration of heat or the death of the sun, portended the death of the subject as well. The problem, rather, arose from the growing awareness on the part of Maxwell and others that there exists "a distinction between our knowledge of the world and the possible nature of the world. . ." (308). To intervene with a model of any sort, including the wave model, is to impose human knowledge on that nature. Accordingly, Maxwell avoided merging his mode of explanation with the topic studied, but he was highly conscious of the "changing functions of metaphor as they extend across scientific fields, shifting from technical description toward generalization that allows productive switching to take place between two fields" (309).

Where Maxwell acted with extreme restraint so as not to reify the world, his correspondent and contemporary John Tyndall mobilized a rhetoric the tendency of which "was not dissolution but making visible" (312), particularly in his work on radiation in general and the "'dark rays'" of the sun in

particular. Tyndall's work in "conveying to a general readership information about current scientific work and illuminating its penumbra of meaning" (311) exerted a particular if long-range influence on Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931). Ultimately, the rise of quantum mechanics out of the shortcomings of the wave theory taken by itself proved to foster a rebirth of realism, but a realism no longer in expressive command of the external world it purports to survey. In Beer's fine conclusion, realism "has come to depend on paradox and on the logic of zeugma" (315).

Beer's fourteenth chapter and coda, "*Square Rounds* and Other Awkward Fits: Chemistry as Theatre," looks at Tony Harrison's *Square Rounds* (1992), a "theatre-piece (he does not call it a play)" (323) that focuses on the life of the German-Jewish chemist Fritz Haber. Haber, who received the 1918 Nobel Prize in chemistry for his work on the synthesis of ammonia, was viewed by the Allies as a war criminal for his work in developing the poison gas that felled innumerable Allied troops and proved to be the ancestor of Xyklon-B, the lethal gas of the German concentration camps. Haber's life is read in relief against other lives, such as that of James Puckle, who invented the gun bearing his name that fired square rounds and round rounds interchangeably, ostensibly so that one could fire the more painful square ammunition at Moslems, while showing mercy to fellow-Christians by using round bullets (324). Then there are "the Hiram brothers, makers of both the maximite gun for TNT and of the anti-asthma glass pipe" (325).

With apologies to Beer, Harrison's title and the piece that goes by that title, above and beyond recuperating the notion of humanity-as-paradox, demonstrate a good deal more than "the vacillations between good and evil outcomes in the world from apparently neutral experiment in the laboratory" (323). Beer correctly traces the problem that Harrison engages back to the alchemical origins of chemistry, but she fails to note that there are prior "vacillations" that are moral rather than chemical in nature. One of the reasons that alchemists such as Michael Maier, writing in *Atalanta Fugiens* (1623), advises the would-be alchemist to emulate the procedures of the housewife going about her daily tasks (322) is that those procedures serve to conceal the alchemical project of transforming dross to gold. Such a transformation, not to mention the myriad of other transformations that underwrite it, is the handiwork of someone playing God.

And playing God is precisely what the likes of Puckle and Haber did, the former in deciding that Christianity is the true faith while Islam is an abomination meriting a painful death, the latter in deciding that poison gas would shorten the war and cause the Germans, whose standard-issue military belt buckle bore the inscription "Gott mit uns," to triumph. The alchemical model in fact comes full circle with Haber, who proposed extracting gold from seawater as a means of funding German reparations.

In the end, Harrison's audience should take away from *Square Rounds* an awareness that "There is no secure divide between the domestic world and the laboratory. Both look like private spaces; both produce and are involved in communal consequences, world-wide transformations" (331). Unless transformed to the "open fields" of Beer's title and interrogated by those who are able to frame questions for the values that underwrite them, both

the domestic world and the laboratory will continue to be sites of power relations and oppression for those unable to frame the questions.

My issues with the concluding chapter duly noted, I wish to note the fluid ease with which Beer mobilizes her nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts in the service of her arguments. Her writing itself is both graceful and economical. If I have any reservation about the present volume, it has to do with Beer's theoretical isolation. She does not engage the likes of George Levine, N. Katherine Hayles, or Michel Serres in critical debate, choosing instead to focus on historically or sociologically oriented science studies, and a relatively narrow band of these. On the one hand, it speaks well of Beer's sense of her own accomplishment that she does not feel the need to do so; on the other, one has a sense that something particularly rich has been lost by this failure to engage. But that loss looms small in relation to the value received by the reader of *Open Fields*.

Northeastern University Stuart Peterfreund

Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction by Christine Rees. New York and London: Longman's, 1996. Pp. 296. $20.95 paper.

In a famous observation that Christine Rees quotes more than once, Thomas Hobbes describes the human condition as "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short." The discordant nature of Hobbes' catalogue suggests the origin of the "utopian imagination" of this book's title. The catalogue is discordant, of course, because of that last word—"short." Hobbes' point resembles the old joke about the two guests at a resort, the first of whom complains about the quality of the food, while the second remarks, "Yes, and such small portions!" Life is terrible but we strangely love it, and so we turn our busy brains to schemes for its improvement.

At first thought, the eighteenth century in Britain does not present itself as a particularly propitious time or place for the study of utopian thinking. This is, after all, the culture which produced as a touchstone Pope's notoriously quiescent "Whatever is, is right," and which successfully resisted the desire for social and political experimentation which bore such spectacular fruit in America and France. Thus, it is one of the signal virtues of *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction* that it brings to fuller consciousness the extent to which utopian speculation permeated the various kinds of fictions which the eighteenth century produced.

To be sure, much of the influence that the utopian imagination exerted on the British mind was negative, and two of Rees's best chapters detail the ways in which Swift and Johnson demystify the hope for utopia, showing how its projections of a better world reflect human idleness, folly, and wishful thinking. At the same time, Rees makes a persuasive case that, alongside the well-known skepticism of *Gulliver's Travels* or *Rasselas*, we must also acknowledge in the British eighteenth century the persistence of plans for—or at least dreams of—human improvement. She is especially convincing that the emergent form of the novel was particularly attracted to strands of uto-

pian thought, even if novels rarely took the form of utopias *per se*. The examples here range from the familiar (*Robinson Crusoe*), to the less familiar or even obscure (Peter Paltrock's *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, and Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village*), to the startling (who would have imagined a place for *Clarissa* or *Amelia* in a book on utopian fictions?).

These discussions are well placed in the history of the utopian imagination and this study begins with a useful review of, we might say, the story so far: Plato and Aristotle, Thomas More, the various writers of a millenarian bent who emerged in the seventeenth century. Rees develops a typology of utopian concerns—food and sex, domestic relations, education, class structure, political organization, the distribution of property—and she reminds us intelligently that we should not confuse the desire for a Golden Age with true utopian speculation. As she puts it, "the utopian imagination thrives on precisely the requirements that Ovid excludes from the Golden Age: the framing and execution of laws, civic and military discipline, the regulation of useful and productive work" (9).

So, when she turns her attention to the eighteenth century, we have a good sense of the history of utopian thinking, and of the books and ideas that these writers were likely to have encountered. Her discussion of *Robinson Crusoe* thus has a new context for Defoe's treatment of such issues as food or (very interestingly) the place of slavery in an ideal state. In particular, many readers of this book will learn a great deal about what she calls "women's utopias" and about how the fictions of Delarivier Manley (*The New Atalantis*) or Sarah Scott (*Millenium Hall*) or a number of others, with their concern for domestic relationships and the education of women, can follow roots deep into the utopian past.

At the same time, the reader may find that the organizing idea, the utopian imagination, is sometimes stretched too far to provide sound conceptual shelter. Rees is careful not to call her work a genre study, but there is a sense here of the problems that genre studies sometimes run into. Put simply, the question begins to arise, what would not be subsumed under the category of the utopian? Where might we usefully draw the line, say, between the genuinely utopian and the simple desire to improve?

The fuzziness of this distinction is particularly prevalent in the weakest chapter in the book, "Domestic Utopias." In pointing, for instance, to the interpolated narrative of Mr. Wilson in *Joseph Andrews*, Rees discusses the idea of the ideally functioning country estate as an instance of the utopian imagination at work. Interesting enough, but the discussion would be much stronger if she also acknowledged the strong component of Golden Age thinking (as she herself analyzes it) inherent in all such speculations. In other words, in a tale like Wilson's, what is utopian vies strongly with what is merely nostalgic, and Rees needs to give us more analytical help in separating out these strands. A comparison with Matthew Bramble's gauzy apostrophe to his estate in *Humphry Clinker*, with its paradisal catalogue of his delicious veal and free-range chickens, would have been especially germane here.

In this chapter, too, Rees points out a number of what we might call odd utopian moments in the fiction of Fielding and Richardson: Tom Jones's encounter with the gypsies, or Lovelace's rather prophetic call, in one of his

flights of fancy, for a legal system of serial monogamy, or Grandison's plan for Protestant nunneries. The sound-bite quality of these moments, both in the novels themselves and in Rees's brief commentary on them, is liable to leave the reader feeling as if he or she has been present at a kind of curio show, where a series of strange objects is put before us. We say, "How remarkable!" and pass on without any deeper reflection.

She misses an opportunity here. Having planted in our minds the fresh possibility of a utopian strain in the fiction of these old rivals, she does not explore the ways in which *Tom Jones* or *Clarissa* is utopian in a larger sense. Why not, to take just one possibility, think about Fielding's masterpiece as a whole as a utopian structure? The narrator has appropriated to himself that oldest of utopian prerogatives—law-giving—so is it not possible to see the fiction itself (with its elaborate and visible set of controls and its perfect dispensation of rewards and punishments) as utopian? This would take the discussion to another level, a place where we could think of the utopian possibilities of representation itself. Rees, however, tends to stick more narrowly with the subject matter of representation.

Missing, too, is a sense of the larger ideological stakes at play in eighteenth-century utopian thinking. While Rees is often very helpful in talking about individual authors and texts, and while she knows the utopian tradition well, she tends to neglect the specific eighteenth-century context. Michael McKeon, in *The Origins of the English Novel*, discusses the ways in which utopian thinking is implicated in what he calls the "conservative" critique of "progressive" ideology, which is to say (in his terms) that the utopian imagination at this time positioned itself between the nostalgic desire for the old aristocratic ideal and the emergent sense of the virtue of sheer acquisition. Whatever one may think of the sometimes ponderous armature of analysis that McKeon has constructed, this is obviously a subtle and stimulating thought, one fully cognizant of the particular history in which eighteenth-century fictions of all kinds emerged. This dimension is largely absent from Rees's study. Also absent is any engagement with McKeon's rather frequent observations on the place of the utopian imagination in the many texts that fall within his panoptic view. Surely she owed this sizeable predecessor the respect, however contentious, of engagement rather than benign neglect.

University of Colorado, Boulder John Allen Stevenson

The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny by Terry Castle. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. 278. $35.00.

In the "Polemical Introduction" to *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (1993), Terry Castle alludes to the "big book" she was in the midst of composing when she discovered a voice for her emergent sexual identity. "Scandalously energized" by the promise of substantiating what had long been secreted in her scholarly productions, Castle cast aside this work-in-progress—which she deemed "nothing less than an

'apparitional' history of modem consciousness"—and began the task of fleshing out what she saw as the vaporous lesbian subject haunting modern culture and her own writing. Now the project she once discarded as a "last-ditch attempt to avoid the issue" of her lesbianism has materialized, and provides an intriguing companion piece to Castle's prior interventions into spectral/sexual otherness. If the figure of the apparitional lesbian (what Castle tropes as the paradoxical recognition through negation of female homosexuality since the Enlightenment) signals an act of disavowal at the heart of patriarchal culture, then *The Female Thermometer* explores the cultural conditions in the eighteenth century that give rise to the uncanny effects implicit in such an act of repudiation.

Reading Freud's 1919 essay on the *"unheimlich"* against recent revaluations of the long eighteenth century by the likes of Michael McKeon and Tzvetan Todorov, Castle contends that the Enlightenment "invented" the uncanny. Where nineteenth-century Whig historiography commemorated the rationalist imperatives that presumably infused the literary and intellectual productions of the previous century, Castle counters with "a new human experience of strangeness" (8) emerging like a primitive fantasy or infantile complex long repressed, but destined to bedevil modern consciousness. She historicizes Freud's claims by accentuating his interest in the late-century gothic fictions of E.T.A. Hoffman (1776-1822) and drawing our attention to Freud's implicit narratology, whereby "modern" novelistic avowals of verisimilitude set up rationalist premises that are taken for granted and then dramatically subverted by uncanny incident. For instance, within this framework Ian Watt's notion that the novel's rise is indebted to "philosophical realism" exposes and is threatened by empiricism's cryptic underside, a potential disenchantment with causal logic and inviolable natural law that inevitably produces a harrowing ghost effect. As Castle professes, "[Freud's] central insight—that it is precisely the historic internalization of rationalist protocols that produces the uncanny—not only sheds light . . . on the peculiar emotional ambivalence the Enlightenment now evokes in us (it has both freed us and cursed us), it also offers a powerful dialectical model for understanding many of the haunting paradoxes of eighteenth-century literature and culture" (15). Historians will no doubt see Castle's project in dialogue with Keith Thomas' magisterial *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) which documents the shifts in early modern social organization that allow New Science to dislodge and supplant divination, alchemy, and other occulted "magical systems" as prevailing epistemological models. However, Castle's work insists that the trace of these obsolete metaphysical propositions continue to haunt any attempt to write the Enlightenment; indeed, there was not so much a "decline" of magic as a "displacement" of it into "the new empire of subjectivity itself' (189).

The historical agency implicit in the phrase "the invention of the uncanny" is best understood in and through Castle's intriguing observations on eighteenth-century technologies of the unseen. Just as the automaton (the "dancing-doll" Olympia) in Hoffman's 'The Sandman" serves as a crucial locus for Freud's meditations on the *unheimlich*, so Castle finds in the "female thermometer" an apt metaphor for the fluctuating nature of Enlightenment epistemology. The strange fictional device that gives Castle's study its title

purports to measure "the exact temperature of a lady's passions" by calibrating a woman's moral disposition along a continuum between "Inviolable Modesty" and "Abandoned Impudence" (21). A facetious offshoot of the weatherglass (itself an increasingly essential accoutrement of bourgeois decor), the female thermometer—alongside other whimsical instruments designed to measure sexual desire, religious enthusiasm, political ardor and so forth—signals the advent of what Castle calls a "new mercurial human subject" (42) in which the ghostly vicissitudes of human desire are rendered measurable. While Castle does not make much of the mechanistic collapse of the man/machine dichotomy here, it is clear that monitoring the vagaries of this new subject is the project of Castle's master trope and the book that bears its name. Where the female thermometer is a fictional device that purports to gauge calculable shifts in consciousness, the popular eighteenth-century phantasmagoria (the subject of Castle's longest chapter) sought to make the chimerical seem altogether real. And yet as she is quick to point out, these public productions of apparitional life operated within a crucial ambiguity: producers of these optical illusions and magic-lantern shows practiced their deceptions under the pretense of scientific demystification, only to exhibit images so eerie and estranging as to elicit horror from the crowd. Are the ghosts we "see" real or imaginary? This tension between the mechanistic explanation of and visceral response to an uncanny sensory experience occasions what Castle calls "spectralization," or "the absorption of ghosts into the world of thought. . . . In the very act of denying the spirit-world of our ancestors, we have been forced to relocate it in our theory of the imagination" (142-3). As the term *phantasmagoria* underwent an etymological shift from connoting a public spectacle to a subjective, phantasmic state of cognition, Castle charts the emergence of a "metaphorics of modern reverie" that begins in romanticism and culminates in psychoanalysis, a new technique for registering that which haunts us.

Between Castle's initial reflections on the female thermometer and her later remarks on the magic-lantern show are a number of bravura readings of eighteenth-century literary texts, both canonical (Richardson's *Clarissa*; Defoe's *Roxana*) and non-canonical (Fielding's *The Female Husband*), that remind us just how eccentric and disquieting the literature of the period was even before gothicism. For instance, Castle reads the strange relationship between Defoe's Roxana and her servant/surrogate Amy as one of suspended infantilism in which the traumatized heroine transfers maternal responsibility onto her subordinate, playing child to the maid's role as mother. This abdication of the maternal regard has sinister consequences when Roxana's daughter resurfaces in the plot: Amy, functioning as uncanny double, recognizes the threat to Roxana's arrested psychic development and murders the daughter in what Castle calls "the last possible act of psychological retrenchment" (54). Interestingly, Castle avoids the now often threadbare discussion of Defoe's potentially ironic role in his novels—the real specter in Defoe criticism—in order to valorize what she calls "a powerful ambivalence, even an anxiety regarding the maternal function" (51) that profoundly affects the narrative trajectories of the text. Similarly, Castle contributes a chapter to the recent revaluation of Fielding's pamphlet, *The Female Husband*, a fictionalized version of the Mary Hamilton story, the female transvestite arrested and

tried in 1746 for marrying another woman while in drag. Within the logic of *The Female Thermometer* Fielding's short denunciation of Hamilton seems to stand as an exemplary uncanny text: it is driven by both "recoil and fascination, the desire to deny and the desire to commemorate," and thus functions as "a sign of a larger ideological tension in Fielding; between his wish for 'natural' distinctions between the sexes—a theology of gender—and his countervailing, often enchanted awareness of the theatricality and artifice of human sexual roles" (69). Fictionalizing Hamilton and relying on euphemism to articulate the implicit threat to gender identification (Hamilton's dildo, for instance, becomes her "wherewithal"), Fielding recapitulates on a textual level the masquerading that he condemns in his subject; in Castle's terms, he is "compromised by his own intimacy with the world of 'false appearances' and illusion, pretense and *trompe l'oeil*—the world, in short, of art" (78). Ultimately, gender anxiety becomes genre anxiety and *The Female Husband* endures as a textual aberration as disturbing as the uncanny woman it seeks to critique. Given her readings of Defoe and Fielding—as well as her later chapters on Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and the twentieth-century scandal of Marie Antoinette's ghost at Versailles—it could be said that Castle's work charts the Enlightenment's restiveness with regard to transgressive femininity, thus serving as both historical ground for her excavations of twentieth-century lesbian identity and a further elucidation of the central epistemological claims of *The Apparitional Lesbian*.

To anyone who has kept abreast of eighteenth-century scholarship over the last decade, reading *The Female Thermometer* will conjure feelings of *déjà vu*—to adopt one of Castle's own guiding tropes—for nearly every chapter has previously appeared in print elsewhere (including two chapters on masquerade that overlap substantially with Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization* from 1986). Therefore it is often the case that Castle's readings seem to operate as discrete entities collected under the sign of the uncanny, thus leaving particular historical connections unexplored: for instance, how might we understand Fielding's satiric agenda in the Hamilton affair in and through the feminization of the episteme implicit in the thermometer? Or how does the mechanical production of ghostly narratives in the phantasmagoria reflect the eighteenth-century preoccupation of the reader as the haunted other of the text (see for instance, the period's frequent rewriting of the Quixote)? Indeed, this last question speaks to a furtive, but ultimately unarticulated argument within *The Female Thermometer*: reading and writing as itself a kind of uncanny activity. In her shrewd attempt to recuperate Radcliffe from critical banalities by yoking *Udolpho* to the project of psychoanalysis and "a new phenomenology of self and other" (125), Castle's subtle evocation of reader as mourner ("*Lugeo ergo sum*: I mourn, therefore, I am") anticipates more recent work by Susan Stewart and Karen Swann on "lyric possession" and romantic mourning, but she never attempts to theorize this trope beyond the immediate context of Radcliffe's text. The case of *Udolpho* is an interesting one however, in that Castle's critical paradigm for reading this most popular of Gothic thrillers parallels Freud's own protracted attempts to understand the vicissitudes of transference; the analyst that raises and attempts to exorcise the mind's phantasms becomes himself spectral, "the return, the reincarnation, of some important figure out of [the patient's] childhood or past"

(quoted in Castle, 138). Reading the uncanny, like all reading, creates a kind of retinal ghost that is our engagement with the text: like the awkward practice of "explained supernaturalism" in a Radcliffe novel or the analyst's therapeutic intentions, analysis often simply displaces one ghoul for another. While one might expect a study of eighteenth-century notions of the uncanny to include more work on recognized Gothic texts, Castle has laid an epistemological foundation for understanding the period's cultural fixations as always already invested in a prescient gothicism. Broadly and rigorously researched and delightfully written, *The Female Thermometer* is a thoughtful exploration of a diverse array of Enlightenment "texts" that will ideally inspire further interrogations of the "new" darker eighteenth-century.

University of South Alabama Scott J. Juengel

Blake: A Biography by Peter Ackroyd. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. Pp. 399. 79 black and white, 33 color illustrations. $35.00.

Back in the 1960s and early 1970s William Blake was a growth industry, fostered by the scholarship of David V. Erdman, Mark Schorer, Harold Bloom, and perhaps especially Northrop Frye. Their evangelical zeal for Blake reawakened the interest in the great verbal and visual artist whose work had achieved its first modern renaissance at the hands of Joseph Wicksteed, Geoffrey Keynes, and S. Foster Damon. In those days of radical dissent (on both sides of the Atlantic) the pithy epigrams and the fiery rhetoric alike spoke powerfully to yet another generation, who read Blake's poetry and studied his visual art with fresh eyes opened by both the anti-establishment radicalism of those years and by the fierce antinomian vision of the poet's work itself. Suddenly, it seemed, Blake was everywhere: his words were invoked not just in literary and cultural studies but in publications ranging from political science and sociology to psychology and economics. Meanwhile his visual art appeared in equally various array, from book jackets to record album covers to silk-screened garments. All at once Blake seemed to be relevant to everything, a sage speaking (and painting) from a distance of nearly two centuries to the pressing, daunting, and even agonizing crises of state and soul in the modern world.

It would have been nice in those years to have had Peter Ackroyd's splendid new biography of this protean artist, for Ackroyd has followed up his dramatic success in reanimating Dickens with another that is in many respects even more remarkable. His is a Blake seen in a thoroughly modern, yet historically contextualized, fashion. Blake has after all been many things to many people, even in just the last century. We had the complex mythologist whom William Butler Yeats appreciated (even when he did not entirely understand him) and whom Damon subsequently unfolded and systematized. We had, too, the antinomian whose politics of vision Mark Schorer traced several decades later, at about the same time Erdman was introducing us to the minutely particularized political prophet who found no empire for his vision within the burgeoning imperialism of Romantic Britain. And while

Bloom placed Blake within a visionary company of Romantics that he would eventually extend through Yeats and into the modern (and post-modern world), Frye was anatomizing a spectacularly influential variety of myth criticism whose roots and paradigm he engagingly and straightforwardly admitted lay in Blake's writings.

But the 1970s were to give us other Blakes, often packaged for popular consumption and selectively interpreted to conform to agendas of post-Viet-Nam politics and sociology. Blake was sanitized and domesticated, and the profane, obstructionist, paranoid, and offensive Blake got lost in the shuffle. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that Blake stock fell sharply in the 1980s and has still not entirely recovered its lofty performance.

In the meantime, however, Blake's visual art was rediscovered, analyzed, and catalogued in wholly new ways, by art historians (like David Bindman and, most importantly and thoroughly, Martin Butlin) as well as by interdisciplinary scholars of the humanities (like W. J. T. Mitchell and, after him, Robert Essick and Morris Eaves) who were prepared (and who helped prepare readers of our own generation) for the rigors of Blake's demanding interdisciplinary, intertextual art. The prospect now appears decidedly sunny for Blake studies, even if Blake has not returned to the center-stage position he occupied in Romantics studies some thirty years ago. For the past decade has witnessed the beginnings of a dramatic reassessment of British Romanticism, propelled by in part by feminist and New Historicist efforts to recover the works of historically marginalized women writers and writers from outside the traditional canonical ground occupied by centrist culture male writers, and in part by a (predictable) reactionary effort to preserve the supposedly hallowed literary ground upon which the canon has long rested. At the same time, revisionist interdisciplinary scholarship in the arts and humanities, as well as in history, sociology, economics, and the sciences has reminded us of how valuable it is to regard all artifacts of culture within the broad spectrum of human interaction generally. This sort of cross-disciplinary thinking, which naturally and inevitably upsets (because it jeopardizes) traditional and narrowly discipline-specific inquiry, is proving particularly useful for assessing the work of artists like Blake, whose output has historically eluded easy categorization and whose works have over the years been variously claimed and colonized by literary scholars and art historians alike, both of whom have tended to disregard one another and to refuse to learn enough about the other's field to be able to speak with much insight about any discipline but their own.

Enter Peter Ackroyd. Not the first, by any means, Ackroyd is nevertheless notable in the extent to which he successfully brings to bear a fully and determinedly interdisciplinary approach to Blake the person, Blake the verbal and visual artist, and Blake the phenomenon. Ackroyd's critical readings of the poetry are judicious and insightful, reflecting the careful study that underlies every page of the biography. Moreover, his observations about the visual art (like his repeated emphasis of the relation of Blake's art to that of eighteenth-century history painters) are often revelatory and always thought-provoking. One is instantly aware, too, of Ackroyd's prowess as a novelist, for his biography of Blake is—if it is nothing else—a rattlingly good *story*. It is history as Carlyle wrote it and as it has come to be written in our own

times by historians like Bruce Catton and film-historians like Ken Burns (both of whom have brought the Civil War to life in previously unimagined fashion). So too with Ackroyd's biography, which restores to us not Blake the laboratory specimen, Blake the museum display. Rather, Ackroyd has given us Blake the citizen of a rowdy London, Blake the frustrated artist, Blake the self-isolating visionary, Blake the paranoid, Blake the fragile and anxiety-laden patriot laboring amid tempestuous and uncertain times and almost pathologically wary of rejection and punishment of any and all sorts.

This is Blake as he must have been: neither sanitized nor filtered to conceal what fails to fit the writer's agenda or disproportionally drawn to fill out an alternative heroic paradigm. One trusts the picture Ackroyd draws at least in part because he provides such a detailed account of the context of Blake's times. This is where the novelist's art is especially apparent, as we read—and thus see for ourselves—the context of Blake's London in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, which presents us with

> a woman filling her kettle at the neighborhood pump, the washing hanging out from poles, the labourers sitting down with their tankards of porter, the birdcages and pots of flowers on the windowsills, the shabby man standing on a corner with a sign in his hat saying "Out of Employ," a man carrying a plate of pickled cucumber on his head while another sells toy windmills, the dogs, the cripples, the boys with hoops. There, on the walls, are signs and handbills—'Vauxhall Opera' and 'Park Fair' pasted alongside handwritten slogans such as 'Joanna Southcott,' 'Murder Jews' and the ubiquitous 'Christ is God.' (93)

Now there is, on one hand, no precisely verifying (in the usual, clinical sense) the accuracy of each of these details. But we recognize their truth and accuracy in the aggregate ("the cripples") just as in the particular ((it is specifically "pickled cucumber" that the one man carries). Indeed, Ackroyd's handling of detail, in which the presence of an occasional "Minute Particular" testifies to the veracity of a myriad of broadly generalized details, is not unlike Blake's own, whether in poetry or in prose.

While initial response to Ackroyd's biography has been positive—even enthusiastic—in part because he has indeed given us a "life" that is reanimated from dead details by the sort of liveliness epitomized in the passage above, some have grumbled that he has not followed the traditional scholar's route and dutifully annotated every insight attributable to one or more of the legion of scholars who have published on Blake over the decades. And indeed this complaint is not without some justification, for while Ackroyd supplies a seven-page bibliography of sources consulted (all of them books), with only a handful of exceptions does he ever refer to any of these sources in his notes. Rather, the very numerous notes document the rich sampling of passages from Blake's own writings and those of his contemporaries, which are quoted liberally and sensitively throughout the book. To fault Ackroyd for proceeding as he has done, in fact, is to miss the point of the sort of book he set out to write (a trade book whose scholarly and critical insights are nevertheless both extensive and compelling)—and succeeded gloriously in writing. Blake is the focus here, not the secondary (or tertiary) writers who have

swelled their own credentials by writing about him and his work. And Blake it is whom we see at every peek, every glance, every calculated stare. The profusion of Blake's own words and the (happily) abundant illustrations, coming as they do within the context of the vigorous narrative, the lively and minutely detailed historical and cultural account, makes it possible for the modern reader to experience Blake—and his art—in ways that have seldom been possible before, even when biographers like Michael Davis have attempted to show us a William Blake who was a new kind of man. Traditional biographies often seem to be composed of roughly equal parts of cultural formaldehyde and rhetorical dust, a combination notoriously unconducive to culturally accurate depiction—or pleasant reading.

And that, finally, is where the great strength of *Blake: A Biography* lies: it is splendid, engaging *reading*. Moreover, it avoids presenting us with either a "triumphant" Blake or a "mad" Blake—or for that matter with any monodimensional Blake whatsoever. In a remarkable gesture of informed fairness, Ackroyd comes down somewhere in the middle in assessing Blake:

> Out of his isolation he created a great myth, but it was one that was never vouchsafed to his contemporaries and one that, even now, is generally neglected or misunderstood. Blake's life is in that sense a parable of the artist who avoids the market place, where all others come to buy and sell; he preserved himself inviolate, but his freedom became a form of solitude. He worked for himself, and he listened only to himself; in the process he lost any ability to judge his own work. He had the capacity to become a great public and religious poet but, instead, turned in upon himself and gained neither influence nor reputation. His great predecessor Milton had declared, 'I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd virtue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall [sic] garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.' Blake eventually eschewed the 'heat' of any public voice or role; but, as a result, it is as if he were another Milton raging in a darkened room.
>
> (162-63)

No great writer can be reduced to a formula, a pattern, a mold; indeed even middling writers—like middling persons—resist such easy categorization. Blake resists most of all, and in the Opposition that is True Friendship (to paraphrase Blake from *the Marriage of Heaven and Hell*), Ackroyd at once invites us to grapple with and understand this complex and dynamic artist while at the same time he candidly whispers in our ear that he has not entirely figured him out himself. It is a human—and a humanizing—admission, and one that makes the invitation to read on all the more irresistible.

University of Nebraska Stephen C. Behrendt

Wordsworth and the Question of "Romantic Religion" by Nancy Easterlin. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press and Cranbury, NJ and London: Associated University Presses, 1996. Pp. 182. $33.50.

This investigation of the role of religious experience in Wordsworth's poetry draws on the pragmatic psychology of William James and the modified empiricism of modern developmental psychology. In a refreshing departure from Freud's view of religion as a regressive illusion, as well as from recent critical positions of either religious affirmation or religious skepticism, Easterlin focuses on how religious experience functions in psychologically specific ways as an integral part of (rather than an escape from) reality. Her focus on religious experience instead of religious doctrine frees her from seeing Romantic religion as simply "secularized" in the tradition of M. H. Abrams; it also enables her to connect, rather than separate, religious experience and social engagement. She makes the much-needed observation that traditionally, "transcendent experience" is part of "an interactive process directed toward spiritual clarity *and* ethical engagement" (39).

Easterlin sees Wordsworth, like James, as facing the problem of how to pursue and validate authentic versions of such experience in the absence of the institutional support provided by orthodox belief systems, which have traditionally provided contexts for mystical and meditational practices. This problem provides the main thread of her argument about "Tintern Abbey," the *Prelude*, the *Excursion*, and the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. She sees "Tintern Abbey" as an effort to use poetic form to contain an internalized religious experience, but she finds that the mystical ineffability of this experience ultimately highlights the "discrepancy between the ground of religion and the ground of art" (45). Because the "creed" of "Tintern Abbey" is produced rather than merely authenticated by a poetry of self-qualification, paradox, and humanized nature, the desire for a permanent system of belief is ultimately deconstructed in the face of language's inadequacy to support such a system. In the *Prelude*, Wordsworth abandons such attempts to represent mystical experience directly, and instead integrates "extra-conceptual" experiences into ordinary life by seeing the very problem of expressing such states as "a useful paradigm for the individual struggle to make sense of life and to give it shape through language" (82). The inability of important conceptual structures such as language and time to express such states is accepted as a sign of the poet's dependence on "the universe beyond himself" (84).

The conflict in the *Prelude* between the beliefs derived from such experience and "available forms of explanation" (101) replays "Tintern Abbey's" conflict between religious experience and orthodoxy. Despite attempts to ground experience in religious orthodoxy, the true sources of knowledge in *The Prelude* are nature and the maternal bond. In a nicely nuanced variation on this familiar theme, Easterlin sees nature as both supernatural and humanized, and by avoiding the Freudian/Lacanian paradigm of the maternal bond as pre-oedipal and pre-linguistic, she is able to see this bond in a much more Wordsworthian way as a nurturing force continuous with adult realities. In the *Excursion* and the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, Easterlin, like most critics, sees a return to religious orthodoxy, but Wordsworth's earlier discovery of

the conflict between individual religious experience and orthodoxy means that individual mystical—and by extension poetic—experience must now be effectively renounced in favor of orthodoxy. In the *Excursion*, however, this new orthodoxy is not really orthodox, because it is conditioned, not by divine dispensation, but by human need and history (a history that acknowledges the transience, rather than the permanence, of religious institutions), and it remains in conflict with the claims of the individual. In the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*' tracing of Anglican history, the individual is reduced to a product of institutional history. Thus, despite Wordsworth's assertion of religious orthodoxy, the continued conflict between individual and orthodox religious experience in fact emphasizes the inadequacies of orthodoxy: "Wordsworth's faith is a product of psychic necessity and self-discipline rather than of felt belief" (150).

Easterlin's pragmatic psychological paradigm enables valuable insights, and her readings of individual poems are usually skillful and sensitive. However, students of Wordsworth and of nineteenth-century religion may find this book's scholarship somewhat thin. For example, the inclusive religious "orthodoxy" with which Wordsworth struggles is never explicitly defined. This is particularly problematic in the discussion of the later poems, because the argument for a Wordsworthian historical/institutional orthodoxy, set against what is presumably the Anglican "theological" orthodoxy, fails to account for the complex relation between theological and historical authority *within* a state religion that was undergoing a great deal of self-examination in the early nineteenth century.

The historical progression Easterlin identifies in Wordsworth may also be somewhat skewed by her narrow selection of Wordsworth texts. For example, according to Easterlin, in the sonnet "I saw the figure of a lovely maid," the later Wordsworth "imagines his living and beloved daughter as a dissolving illusion" instead of "seeing the potentially illusory as real" as he does earlier. But do not some of the Lucy poems, dating back as early as 1799, imagine just such a dissolution of the real? ("But she is in her grave, and, oh, / The difference to me!" ["She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" 11-12].) Easterlin discusses the "Imagination" passage in Book 6 of the *Prelude* in terms of language's inadequacy, but without noting Wordsworth's revision of this passage, in which "Imagination" becomes explicitly subject to the "sad incompetence of human speech" (1850 *Prelude* 6.593). This and other revisions of the *Prelude* would have played nicely into her argument about Wordsworth's later acceptance of the limitations of poetic language.

More important is Easterlin's neglect of Wordsworth's own discussions of some of this book's central concerns, a neglect particularly noticeable because her argument is generally sympathetic to the psychological turns of Wordsworth's thought. Though she skillfully takes Paul de Man to task for misunderstanding Wordsworth's "habit of merging literal and figurative language" (98), she fails to address Wordsworth's central discussion of this issue in the essays "Upon Epitaphs" (one of de Man's favorite Wordsworthian texts). Much of her argument turns on the contrast between religion's ability to contain transcendent experience institutionally and poetry's inability to do so, but she never mentions Wordsworth's discussion of the "affinity between religion and poetry"—an affinity conditioned by religion's ability to be "rec-

onciled to substitutions" versus poetry's need for the "sensuous incarnation" of language—in the 1815 "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" (*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Smyser, 3 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974] 3: 65).

Easterlin chooses to discuss transcendence via a psychologically defined "mysticism" rather than the more common route of the "sublime," excusing herself from an extended engagement with the latter term by calling it "a hopelessly skating signifier if there ever was one" (160n11). However, her argument shares a good deal of unavoidable ground with both Romantic and modern discussions of the sublime, and for Wordsworth and his contemporaries the term was not at all a "skating signifier," but had very specific, often pragmatically psychological definitions in both the English and the German traditions, The "irony" that she perceives in the way language's inadequacy indicates the self's dependence on a realm beyond its own conceptual limits is a clear variation on the familiar theme of the Kantian sublime, and a fuller treatment of that tradition would perhaps have lessened Easterlin's own repeated dependence on an undefined sense of "paradox" and "irony." Even if a full account of the sublime is beyond the scope of this book, Easterlin should at least have discussed Wordsworth's own fragmentary essay on the sublime and the beautiful, because it is directly relevant to her distinction between the unrepeatability of transcendent experience in the writing or reading of poetry and the repeatability of such experience in religious rituals (46). Wordsworth argues (against Burke) that in fact non-institutional sublime experience, such as the sublime perception of landscape, can be cultivated into a habitual, repeatable experience. Easterlin's neglect of much modern work on the sublime is particularly unfortunate because, for example, the deep Freudianism of Thomas Weiskel's classic *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) would have provided a logical target for her pragmatic critique.

It is because this book is potentially such an important revision of our understanding of Wordsworth's relation to religious experience that one may wish Easterlin had cast her net a little wider and discussed more of the texts that are immediately relevant to the book's concerns. The texts Easterlin neglects would not have refuted her argument, but they certainly would have enriched it, and would have helped to make this original and insightful study as significant as it deserves to be.

Auburn University David P. Haney

The Jews & Germany: From the 'Judeo-German Symbiosis' to the Memory of Auschwitz by Enzo Traverso. Trans. Daniel Weissbort. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. pp. xxiv + 215. $33.50.

This book, which originally appeared in France in 1992, is an important contribution to the literature on the Jews and Germany. While Part I of the study deals with the vicissitudes of the Jewish struggle in Germany for

emancipation and assimilation up to the holocaust, Part II is devoted, above all, to preserving the memory of the crimes perpetrated against German Jews. The author argues sometimes brilliantly and sometimes zealously, but always with a singularness of purpose that the often cited and ruefully longed for Judeo-German symbiosis, which, according to theory, characterized the relationship of Jews and Germans in varying degrees for a hundred and fifty years, was, in fact, a myth. It was, according to the author, a myth equal in measure to the illusion harbored by German-Jews that they somehow belonged to Germany. As for the actual concept of the Judeo-German symbiosis, it is found by the author in the overly optimistic pronouncements of the Berlin Rabbi, Leo Baeck and the philosopher Martin Buber. While the words of Baeck and Buber . . . "no doubt mark the origin of the myth of the 'Judeo-German symbiosis' . . . they also show that it was a reality in the eyes . . . of a very large section of the Jewish population" (9). Traverso also points to Hermann Cohen, the well-known founder of the school of neokantianism, who celebrated in his patriotic texts during World War I the myth of the Jewish-German symbiosis. Yet, as Traverso points out, the Germans themselves never seriously considered the idea of a cultural synthesis with the Jewish tradition. At best, they accepted the Jews, provided the latter no longer regarded themselves as Jews, provided they had abandoned Judaism. The myth of the Jewish-German symbiosis was finally shattered by the Nuremberg laws of 1935, the pogroms of *Kristallnacht* in 1938, and was ultimately dealt its death blow in Auschwitz.

In discussing the evolution of this myth, Traverso first returns to the beginnings of Jewish emancipation in Germany, which he traces back to the late 18th century, He examines the roles played therein by the high Prussian official Christian Wilhelm von Dohm and by Moses Mendelssohn. He then turns to the early nineteenth century, focusing on the salons of Henriette Herz and Rahel Varnhagen of Berlin, which he terms the most favorable places for a Jewish-German dialogue. They were frequented by some of Germany's best minds, including such figures as Goethe, Schleiermacher and the brothers Schlegel. But the author asserts that these meeting places of Jews and Germans failed in their mission of facilitating a symbiosis of cultures—a failure evidenced most convincingly by the flight of the salon's mistresses from their judaeity. Indeed, the author reads such conversions to Christianity as symptomatic of the failure of efforts at symbiosis. Each subsequent generation of Jews would be marked not only by efforts to merge judaeity with German culture, but more so by conversions of Jews to Christianity. True, the German Jews made great advances in the years of emancipation during the latter 19th century, particularly in the liberal professions. These were years which enabled large numbers begin to live like middle-class Germans, but as the author stresses, rarely with middle class Germans" (16). Jews who aspired to integrate entirely into German society and to be accepted by a markedly anti-Semitic milieu often succeeded in internalizing, and subjecting themselves to, the prejudices of which they were victims, giving rise to the well-known phenomenon of "Jewish self-hatred" (17). Some Jews, of course, achieved singular and stellar success, such as Berlin's most important banker and Bismarck's financial advisor Gerson Bleichröder who was even ennobled, but who was never accepted into Prussian aristocratic circles

which kept him at a distance and treated him with a measure of contempt (17). In the end, Bleichröder, similar to countless other successful Jews, was considered a parvenu of dubious background. But whether the Jews emerge in this study as parvenus, as pariahs, as foreigners and outsiders in Germany, as the extremely patriotic Jews of World War I, or as admirers of nordic beauty, as was the case with Walter Rathenau (cf. 93-98), they remained in German society always the outsiders, always the 'Others' whose precarious existence was circumscribed by anti-Semitism.

According to the author, the most convincing period of a real Judeo-German symbiosis occurred during the cultural blossoming of the Weimar Republic, though only in a milieu of "anti-conformist and marginal intellectuals" (12). At the same time, the progress of Jews in the Weimar Republic was accompanied by an upsurge in anti-Semitism. In the end, those Jews who held steadfast to their belief in a Jewish-German symbiosis were really the victims in a one-sided love affair. In the final years of the unraveling of the most coveted and cherished Jewish myth one finds the astute observations of such writers as Heinrich Mann who noted in 1934 in *Der Hass* (hate) that, although the German Jews carried Germany with them through the world as their second homeland, they were deprived in Germany itself of their rights and could hold no public position—worse yet, Germans seemed to have the right to ruin them or murder them (7).

Traverso argues cogently in Part II of *The Jews and Germany* that the beginning of the Federal Republic of Germany was marked by a "deliberate forgetfulness" with regard to the murder of the Jews, making any dialogue with the survivors of the genocide impossible (135). Under Adenauer the policy of *Wiedergutmachung* (the decision to pay reparations to Jews who had been persecuted) served only to relieve the conscience of those who wished to forget (141). On the literary front, such novels as *Der Fragebogen* (1951) seemed to spurn all attempts to render the German people culpable in the murder of the Jews. As for the German Democratic Republic, veiled anti-Semitism in the guise of anti-Zionism was amply apparent roughly up to Stalin's death—a period when any Jew "could be accused of organizing a 'Zionist plot'" (138). In the following years the Jewish question in the GDR was marginalized or eclipsed by the official need not to commemorate the victims of nazism, but rather to celebrate the heros of resistance to fascism, who, of course, were German Communists—a celebration which was tied to the legitimization of the GDR as the only true bulwark against lingering fascism and nazism in Germany.

The brunt of Traverso's criticism is directed, above all, against the Federal Republic, the scene in the 80s of the *Historikerstreit* at whose heart lies the attempt by prominent German historians to relatvize the horrors of the *Shoah* —an attempt which even leads to its "banalization" (151). As for German reunification, it put, according to the author, "an impermeable lid on any critical appraisal of the past and the cause of the division of the country" (155). That division, of course, was an open wound, a daily reminder of nazism and its crimes against German Jews who had mistakenly and tragically believed in the myth that they belonged to Germany. In his final observations, Traverso writes: "That nation is guilty which refuses to shoulder the responsibility of memory, the only way to prevent a recurrence of the crimes

of the past" (161). This book breaks new ground and is a tour de force in deconstructing the myth of the Judeo-German symbiosis as it is in its indictment of Germany's manipulation of its history—its attempts and longing to forget. The book's only drawback are the numerous misspellings of German words which could have easily been corrected by careful proof-reading, distracting from an otherwise significant study.

Texas A&M University Richard Critchfield

Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject by Carole Boyce Davies. New York: Routledge, 1994. Pp. 228. $55.00 cloth; $16.95 paper.

> Is there a line between middle-east and far east?
> And where's nearly east?
> And can't someone be black, asian *and* far eastern?
> In my colonial style geography books
> With whole areas coloured empire pink
> There was a line . . .

This stanza comes from a poem by Kamila Zahno, a poet who publishes in Britain, and one of the black women writers I discovered in Carole Boyce Davies's important study, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. Although it introduces numerous writers unfamiliar to readers in the U.S., the book's more significant contribution is theoretical. To begin, it offers propositions that deconstruct and redefine each of the first three terms its title announces—along with many additional terms (American, theory, post-coloniality) that we too often use reflexively. Black women are writing everywhere, Davies reminds us constantly, not only in the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean, but in Brazil, Australia, and in Britain, where "Black" identifies people of African *and* Asian descent. Issues of identity are complicated not only by post-structuralist theories but by what Davies in her subtitle announces as "migrations of the subject." With the dismantling of the European empires, and the subsequent movements of colonized peoples, the maps that once defined nations and identity have had to be redrawn. Analogously, the writing of black women, whether they travel or stay at "home," demands new maps for critics who lack a context in which to locate this work.

One strength of this study is its deployment of the trope of migration. "Black women's writing . . . should be read as a series of boundary crossings and not as a fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing" (4). The greatest failure of black feminist criticism so far, Davies argues, is its myopic focus on the U.S.—a failure that reinscribes the existing hierarchy of political and economic power that black feminists are explicitly committed to overturning. Black women's writing is better understood as a transnational, multicultural discourse that "redefines its identity as it reconnects and re-members, brings together black women dis-located by time and space" (4).

With justification, Davies compares her project to those of Gloria Anzaldúa and Paula Gunn Allen as well as to a long line of Pan Africanist thinkers. Pan Africanists, according to Davies, agree that the export of Africans to the "New World" unified Africans across their ethnic differences even as it cut them off from their past. It created the possibility of another "imagined community" that was on one hand, a unified homeland, on the other a diaspora. Davies's refusal to choose between these possibilities is productive. As her references to Pan Africanists suggest, she does concentrate on writers of African descent—a decision that serves her well. Even so, the complexities of cultural and national difference, political ideologies, class, and sexuality spin out to a sometimes dizzying extent.

Readers are grounded by a wide range of critical references. Davies draws from a breadth of feminist thinkers around the globe; like Barbara Christian in "The Race for Theory," she argues for a capacious conception of "theory" that removes it from the exclusive domain of European academicians. She understands theory as "frames of intelligibility" through which we see and interpret the world or as the "discursive ways of making sense of structures of values and beliefs which circulate in any given culture" (41). She makes the much needed observation that even while being dismissed as non-theoretical by some members of the academy, black feminist thinkers provided the terms of race, gender, and class and multiple subjectivities that are now central to theories of feminism and postmodernism. While receptive to various theorists, Davies retains her right to choose what is useful for her project. Borrowing from Zora Neale Hurston's "How It Feels to be Colored Me," Davies entitles her second chapter "Negotiating Theories or 'Going a Piece of the Way With Them.'" Like Hurston's persona walking with the visitors who reward her for speaking pieces, Davies takes ideas from white feminists, black male nationalists, deconstructionists, and Marxists and uses them to the extent that she can.

In perhaps its most innovative formal gesture, *Black Women, Writing and Identity* blends the critical and the theoretical with the autobiographical. Davies weaves what she calls "migration narratives" into the study's opening chapter. The first is the story of her mother, who migrated to the U.S. to work and make better opportunities for her children, and who now travels back and forth between her Caribbean birthplace and the various locations of her children's homes. Some of the migration narratives are "horror stories." For example, when Davies asks to see "Black women's writing" in Brazil, she is shown books by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, despite the fact that many black women write in Portuguese. In the most deeply felt story, Davies recounts having dinner with colleagues, when one complains that on a Caribbean cruise, she was welcomed by people everywhere except in Trinidad, Davies's birthplace. With a self consciousness that discomfits her (and her reader), Davies asserts that the indifference of Trinidadians to tourists is a positive development. The text moves on to her childhood memories of "Tourist Annie," a figure who, in an appeal to colonialist fantasy, greeted ships docking at Port-of-Spain. This horror story is followed by an extended indictment of U.S. imperialism. Collectively, the "migration narratives" enact Davies's belief that Black feminist criticism "can be a praxis where the theoretical positions and the criticism interact with the lived experience" (55).

Significantly, in a book whose prose is often stilted, the "migration narratives" seem to liberate the author's voice.

Seeking texts that enact her theory of black women as migrating subjects as well as demonstrating that literary texts are themselves theoretical, Davies explicates Ama Aidoo's play *Anowa* (1970). A retelling of a story from Akan oral tradition, *Anowa* recounts the incidents in the life of a woman who rebels against the social script and chooses her own husband, who initially shares her idealism but is snared by the lure of the slave trade's easy money. In turn the protagonist, Anowa, rejects the status that her husband's riches bestow and is ultimately perceived by the community as a mad woman. Significantly, the place where Anowa is freest is on a highway, a figurative borderland without societal constraints. Davies reads this text in dialogue with *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and through the perspectives of theories drawn from, among others, Anzaldúa, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Terese Ebert, Donna Harraway, Kobena Mercer, and Hortense Spillers. Davies's cross-cultural reading highlights the intersections of gender and class, colonial and neo-colonial relationships, and masculinity and femininity. The tropes of "home" and "exile" reverberate throughout the study (which contends that women are frequently in exile at home), but they resound most tellingly here.

So effective is this chapter that I wished for much more sustained engagement with literary texts. The chapter on Black Women Writing in the U.S. develops a provocative reading contrasting Morrison's *Beloved* and Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose*; Davies finds representations of gender in the latter text to be far more transgressive. But Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging*, a novel that describes a young Jamaican girl's migration to London, Paule Marshall's short story "To Da-Duh in Memoriam," Audre Lorde's *Zami*, Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* and *Lucy*, and the poems of Marlene Philip are among the many works that receive briefer consideration. At one point, Davies notes the importance of "tracking" the oral narrative of Ibo Landing, which is a motif in Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*, through Julie Dash's film, *Daughters of the Dust* and Grace Nichols's volume, *I Is a Long Memoried Woman*, but she leaves that task to others.

The motif of the concluding chapter is a West Indian folksay: "It's not everything you can talk, but . . ." With this honest and deft gesture, Carole Boyce Davies invites her readers to continue the brave and challenging project that is this book.

Rutgers University Cheryl A. Wall

A Gulf So Deeply Cut: American Women Poets and the Second World War by Susan Schweik. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1991. Pp. 385. Cloth, $39.50; paper, $14.50.

> Women and poets see the truth arrive.
> Then it is acted out,
> The lives are lost, and all the newsboys shout.

. . . . . .
Women and poets believe and resist forever:
The blind inventor finds the underground river.
(Muriel Rukeyser, *Beast in View*, 57)

Susan Schweik's *A Gulf So Deeply Cut* has the potential weaponry to wound a full fifty years after the event. The event in question is World War II, yet the real conflict in this treatment of war poets is the reception and non-reception of women's voices in the male canon of war poetry. The women poets considered in this study interweave a host of issues in their poems: women's roles in wartime, what constitutes "art" in war, and the concept of literary pacifism in the midst of a "just war." Schweik herself takes on this task of resolving contradictions because the poets she profiles did not let gender exempt them from an active war discourse.

The title of the treatment, *A Gulf So Deeply Cut*, is taken from Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*, in which a woman is asked to bridge the abyss between those who make war and those who would stop it. Woolf's character selects an ellipsis to signify the gulf separating the two forces, but Schweik's poets wield more than dots. The poets range from Marianne Moore and Edna St. Vincent Millay to Gwendolyn Brooks and Muriel Rukeyser. Many readers will become acquainted here for the first time with Nisei women poets like Toyo Suyemoto and Mitsuye Yamada, and renew their acquaintance with well-known lyricists like Elizabeth Bishop and H.D.

A Gulf So Deeply Cut reflects Schweik's considerable critical acuity and extensive research on gender and war. The book itself is a feminist treatment of war poetry focusing on the intersection of gender and conflict. The chief flaw in this innovative and ultimately rewarding study, however, is the very multiplicity of voices heard. Schweik is attempting to do two things simultaneously—to introduce women war poets who were largely ignored and to contextualize her critique historically. In order to do the latter, she must discuss the masculine tradition of soldier poetry and the critical climate of the time. There is simply *too much* material, too diverse in its appeal and analysis for one study.

For example, the section titled "Women Poets and the Epistolary War Poem," could have been a book project in itself. In the prefatory remarks to this section, Schweik states: "This chapter's path will be circuitous, moving from the work of young male soldier poets of the Second World War (particularly Karl Shapiro) back to that of their predecessors, both combatant (Wilfred Owen) and civilian (the young Ezra Pound and Wallace Stevens), and then forward once again" (86). The chapter, and sometimes the book, traces too circuitous a path for readers to properly navigate. An appendix with some of the major poems that were cited would have been useful as well. The Karl Shapiro "V-Letter" snippets were so tantalizing yet so fragmentary that I was forced to retrieve my 1956 anthology of modern poets to reread the poem; I went back to the anthology to properly savor the refined edge of Bishop's "The Roosters" as its fowl generals with "protruding chests / in green-gold medals dressed, / planned to command and terrorize the rest." (Anyone who doubts the force of Bishop's imagery at work in 1946 has

only to glance at the contemporary scene where medals or their absence cause warriors like Admiral Mike Boorda to commit suicide.)

Another flaw in *A Gulf So Deeply Cut* is the sheer multitude of authorities brought to bear on each poem's treatment. For example, if the epistolary tradition is the core of a section, with the image of a woman on the home front linked by letter to the war scene,I would like to hear more of Schweik's perspective unshadowed by citations. In a two-page discussion, Jane Cooper ("Nothing Has been Used"), Paul Fussell ("The War in Black and White"), Laura Mulvey (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*), and Judith Williamson (*Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*) all have their say. Here I lose sight of Schweik's purpose as the voices of the women war poets grow even more indistinct.

The audience most interested in this work would be members of the academy who like their poetry contextualized. Even those who knew of Archibald MacLeish's passionate belief that writers were pivotal figures in expressing war and peace issues may not have known that MacLeish, the newly appointed Librarian of Congress, was also busy heading the 1941 Office of Facts and Figures, established by President Roosevelt, while writing anti-fascist verse plays for radio. In 1937, CBS radio produced MacLeish's *The Fall of the City* with such well-known actors as Orson Welles and Burgess Meredith. Schweik postulates that the opening lines of *The Fall of the City* are remarkably similar to "the inaugural gestures of the subgenre Millay would take up five years later" (70). MacLeish's second antifascist radio play, *Air Raid*, inspired by Picasso's *Guernica* was produced a year after. Ironically enough, the main voices heard in *Air Raid* are women's, struggling to be heard.

While MacLeish was recognized for his work, a writer like Edna St. Vincent Millay was either ignored or criticized when she subscribed to a similarly propagandistic poetry. Schweik draws our attention to the critical outcry that occurred when Millay's verse radio drama, *The Murder of Lidice*, was produced. Schweik tells us that the Czech town of Lidice was eradicated by the Nazis for the suspected harboring of underground leaders. In an attempt to erase Lidice from the national and international memory, 173 men and boys were shot to death, 81 children were gassed in Chelmno, 203 women were sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp, and all buildings were razed to the ground (61). Millay's attempt to intervene was one of many throughout the Allied world. Why is it then that Millay's War Board-commissioned work was so vilified by critics like Edmund Wilson and Oscar Williams? Was it misogyny or simply a dismissal of bad poetry written for the war effort? Schweik locates the contradiction in critical reception in women's bodies—that when women become propagandists they are perceived as peddling language in a form of prostitution considered emasculating to male readers and critics. The point is underscored throughout the book—women who were thought of as not possessing the authority of experience, who could only stand and wait, were guilty of transgression when they dared to cross the home front.

Perhaps the most valuable chapters in *A Gulf So Deeply Cut* are those dealing with the voices of Nisei women who were interned along with 120,000 other Japanese-Americans during the war years. Some of the poets use pseu-

donyms, ("Ann Nisei"); some, like Toyo Suyemoto, dared to publish under their own names. A poem like "Retrospect" skirts the war cautiously: "No other shall have heard / When these suns set, / The gentle guarded word / You may forget." The evasiveness is purposeful; the war touches this woman, this civilian in a way the soldier could not fathom. Schweik, through the voices of Nisei writers, places us directly in the hysteria of the times. For thirty-four pages we are Japanese-American citizens, rousted from our homes, forced to destroy any Japanese-language artifacts, relocated and incarcerated, but not silenced. Any discourse in the camps was encouraged, as long as race, ethnicity, citizenship, and patriotism were defined according to WRA/War Relocation Authority) guidelines.

This self-portrait, entitled "Et Ego in America Vixi," was written in June 1941 by Hisaye Yamamoto. Yamamato's inventory, as critiqued by Schweik, is part U.S. loyalty oath and part Nisei armor:

> My skin is sun-gold
> My cheekbones are proud
> My eyes slant darkly
> And my hair is touched
> With the dusky bloom of purple plums.
> The soul of me is enrapt
> To see the wisteria in blue-violet cluster,
> The heart of me breathless
> At the fragile beauty of an ageless vase.
> But my heart flows over
> My throat chokes in reverent wonder
> At the unfurled glory of a flag—
> Red as the sun
> White as the almond blossom
> Blue as the clear summer sky. (195)

These voices revealed by Schweik come from behind barbed wire fences, from sleeping quarters in abandoned stalls at the Tanforan Race Track in Northern California, from poets who may have been steeped in the *tanka* tradition but who forged new forms to go beyond cherry blossoms to the red, white, and blue. The voices cross gender, ethnicity, time, and nationalities.

A Gulf So Deeply Cut succeeds at disclosing what war poetry can be and in so doing defines the intermingling of combatants and noncombatants. If Wilfred Owen and Randall Jarrell remain your touchstone for measuring the heroism and lunacy of war, then this book will test you. If you thought women were spectators in time of war, let Schweik introduce you to the sonnet sequence "Gay Chaps at the Bar." The latter is Gwendolyn Brooks's attempt to translate the African-American presence in battle into the terms of American social justice. Brooks assumes the voice of a comrade, a veteran, one of those privileged to speak. There are women in the barroom and the sight of "young officers [who] return from the front crying and trembling." A brother speaks but it is a woman, Gwendolyn Brooks, who takes the step from spectator to participant by recording the aftermath of carnage. In that step, Brooks and her sister poets inscribed themselves as makers, not specta-

tors, of "war art." Susan Schweik's challenge was to record those who sung of war no matter what their reception.

Wayne State University Laurie C. Alkidas