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The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume by Adam Potkay. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994. Pp. 272. $36.95.

In this book, Adam Potkay argues that eighteenth-century literature and politics might best be understood in terms of an ongoing dialectic between eloquence and politeness. He links each of these to a specific set of political commitments, with eloquence coding for the values of ancients, Tories, the Country writers, and the Opposition to Walpole, and with politeness coding for the interests of the moderns, the Court, new Whigs, and an emerging bourgeoisie.

As the dialectic works itself out, politeness "gains ascendancy over, but never manages to silence, the nascent republican ideal of eloquence and its masculinist political assumptions" (1). In the end it is Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* that achieves "an ideal reconciliation of eighteenth-century oppositions . . . the passionate fierceness of the citizen-warrior blends with the delicate affections fostered by domesticity; precommercial virtue joins with modern manners" (206).

The "fate" of eloquence, then, in the period 1730–1770 is to be simultaneously invoked and lamented, invoked in a nostalgic appeal to a receding tradition of civic humanism and republican virtue, regretted because the times no longer seem right for a new Demosthenes, both because the Opposition has no senate to convince and because Enlightenment skepticism and an emerging ideology of politeness have begun to render eloquence a species of demagoguery and bad manners.

Potkay devotes somewhat less attention to the formation of politeness than to the survival of eloquence, but this is only because, with the work of J. G. A. Pocock and his followers, especially Lawrence Klein (*Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994]), it is assumed that a nascent middle class consolidated its political authority through the myriad codes simultaneously and effectively imposed by displays of mannered behavior and polite writing. While Klein ties the discourse of politeness to the interests of a new Whig regime, Potkay shows how the rhetoric of eloquence (though perhaps not eloquence itself) could be restored, alongside wishes for the restoration of the Stuart line.

Potkay calls this period "the age of Hume" because he finds in "Of Eloquence" an exemplary ambivalence between ancient oratory and modern politeness. "'Of Eloquence' bespeaks at once a fascination with, and a distance from, the power of figurative eloquence it evokes . . . [an ambivalence] that characterizes the political and aesthetic discourses of midcentury Britain" (29). While one might read "Of Eloquence" as a studied demystification of eloquence through an inquiry into the historical conditions that effectively damp inflamed oratory; while Hume concludes his essay with the advice that "our modern authors should not elevate their stile or aspire to rivalship with the ancient," but should instead "observe a method, and make that method conspicuous to the hearers"; Potkay holds that Hume's philosophical suspicion of eloquence is subservient to nostalgia for a lost ideal, a nostalgia rooted in the need for a new Demosthenes to challenge the modern Philip (Walpole). Thus, Hume's "ending call for expository cohesion does not 'rise

naturally' from his earlier argument [but] seems curiously like a digression, an afterthought" (28).

Potkay offers forceful readings of Pope, Gray, Hume, Sterne, and Macpherson in order to bear out his claim that a dialogue between eloquence and politeness shapes both the style and substance of canonical eighteenth-century works. His book is most effective in drawing attention to the frequency with which social and political oppositions were recast in terms of an ongoing debate over the status of eloquence and polite style. In a representative example, Potkay addresses the obvious objection that "polite ideology" does not seem an adequate description of a period during which satire was a dominant genre. Potkay holds, however, that Pope's *Dunciad*, despite its pissing contests and ritual annihilation of dunces, qualifies as a polite work. Ambivalence toward any direct appeal to rhetorical *action* leads Pope to encapsulate his invective in the patina of what Potkay calls "a polite antivisualism" and an "anticorporeal eloquence." Pope "balances the moral enthusiasm he learned from Bolingbroke with a more savvy 'Horatian' sense of detachment" (122), with the result that "Pope's late poetry . . . wields a Protestant poetics against the various idol worshippers of the day" (129). *The Dunciad* accordingly "ranks not only as one of the most punitive poems in English literature but also among the most polite" (130). This reluctant drift toward the dominant ideology is matched on the other side by Sterne's novels, in which we find more direct endorsements of the new hegemony: *Tristram Shandy* is "a Whig satire in the tradition of Addison's de Coverley papers" (153); while "*A Sentimental Journey* may be read as Sterne's fable of the ways in which commerce . . . supplants traditional forms of rhetoric with the new imperatives of polite style" (143).

In his introductory "Discourse on Method," Potkay links the kind of literary history he is practicing here with the "movement" for which John Bender supplied a recent manifesto: "I would like to situate my work in relation to a hypothetical mainstream of new historicism" (12–13). What participation in the movement requires in the present case are the following assumptions: 1) that rhetorical gestures like eloquence and politeness serve as tropes for specific ideological interests (Potkay calls his book "a post de-Manian history" of tropes); 2) that a Hegelian dialectic plots the historical relation between contested categories, such that they are reconciled or synthesized in an "ideal" unity; and 3) that we may diagnose and overcome the errors of the past by studying history in the manner of the new historicism (Potkay writes, "I have no activist aspirations to hasten its [polite ideology's] demise and usher in a classless society, although I am sure that this book, as an exposé of the power relations that lie at the heart of politeness, might afford ammunition for those less comfortable with the class system than I am" [18–19]). Potkay has written a useful book despite these assumptions, and much of his evidence strains against his opening "Discourse on Method."

Beginning with the equation of tropes and ideologies, what needs to be questioned is whether the view of rhetoric as a system of tropes and figures is adequate to the role of rhetoric in the eighteenth century. Potkay chooses to employ "a limited use of the term *rhetoric*," defining it as "the art of describing, analyzing, and systematizing the eloquence of the past" (1). The bracketing off of a more inclusive definition of rhetoric is hardly incidental

to Potkay's project. For if we define rhetoric, with Aristotle, as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," then eloquence for the accomplished speaker would amount to one of several "means of persuasion" that could be called upon "in any given case," that is, when circumstances demand. Among the other tactics in the speaker's persuasive arsenal would also no doubt be "softer" means of persuasion, like politeness. The foremost quality of rhetoric so conceived would be the development (usually through a course of instruction) of a *faculty* for ascertaining the kind of discourse appropriate to different purposes and audiences. One would then expect accomplished speakers and writers of all political persuasions to put their rhetorical education to work identifying those forms most likely to gain the assent of their audiences. In this case, however, it becomes far more difficult to assign ideologies and epistemologies to specific rhetorical strategies. Ronald Reagan and Woody Guthrie were both folksy.

Despite the use of eloquence and politeness as tropes for Tory (ancient) and Whig (modern) interests, Potkay acknowledges that more than one party rallied behind the banner of ancient eloquence. In his discussion of the *Dunciad*, Potkay observes that Pope's primary representative of the debasement of ancient eloquence was John "Orator" Henley. Henley was a pedagogue who sought to "revive an ancient Athenian and Roman school of philosophy, rhetoric, and elocution" in order "to supply the want of an university, or universal school in this capital, for the equal benefit of persons of all ranks, professions, circumstances, and capacities" (107, 111). Potkay sides with Pope in likening Henley's plan to a "hucksters pitch" delivered with "puffing assurance and a degree of charlatry . . . [that] smacks of heroic drama" (107–108). It would seem that when a populist advocates the revival of eloquence, he becomes, in Pope and Potkay's terms, a leveler and haranguer (111, 112); yet when Pope and Bolingbroke appeal to the "democratic" ideal of Demosthenean eloquence, they qualify as defenders of Republican virtue and "Liberty." The battle described here seems to be less between eloquence and politeness, and more between those who would extend and those who would restrict the use of classical rhetoric to educate the masses. Pope and the ancients could not affirm the efficacy of ancient eloquence without acknowledging the dangers posed when training in the arts of effective public discourse fell into the wrong hands.

Elsewhere Potkay notes the eighteenth-century commonplace that the same rhetorical mode could be appropriated by competing interests. Eloquence is especially versatile in this way. In Thomson's "Liberty" we read that "the power of ELOQUENCE at large/ Breath'd the persuasive or pathetic soul./ Still'd by degrees the democratic storm,/ Or bad it threatening rise, and tyrants shook" (in Potkay, 34). Eloquence stills *or* raises the democratic storm, a point that was not lost upon Pope when he attacked Henley. Similarly, Lyttelton, although dubbed the Demosthenes of the Opposition, "casts a cold glance at eloquence . . ." (55). And Potkay also observes that in an early draft of the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," Gray gives us "some mute inglorious Tully" instead of Milton. No wonder Opposition writers were nervous about invoking eloquence! They may well have fixed on Demosthenes in order to avoid the appearance of being rhetorical bedfellows with Cromwell's secretary. Mary Wortley Montagu was alert to this point:

"You stand the champion of the people's cause," she has Pope ventriloquize to Bolingbroke, "And bid the mob reform defective laws./ Oh! was your pow'r, like your intention, good!/ Your native land wou'd stream with civic blood" ("Epistle from Pope to Lord Bolingbroke," in Potkay, 129).

Potkay's decision to align his work with the new historicism brings with it in addition a commitment to dialectical historiography as a means of narrating the fate of eloquence. But the demands of a dialectically engineered plot also explain some of the book's omissions. Potkay rules out discussion of pulpit oratory (where the "politics" of eloquence would become far more involved). He indicates that he will not discuss female writers, who, "major and minor . . . tend to champion the new ideology of politeness without the ambivalence of their male contemporaries: for why should any woman writer desire, even halfheartedly, a return to the rigidly sexist communitarian assumptions of Demosthenes' Athens?" (8), even though female writers from Aphra Behn to Mary Wollstonecraft did attempt to steal the fire of "male" eloquence, and many felt debarr'd from the polite ideal as it was being formulated by passed-over neoclassicists. And he seems reluctant to acknowledge a similar tension between eloquence and politeness in writers before Hume, most notably Dryden and Shaftesbury. In his "Defence of the Epilogue," Dryden, riding the crest of a restored Stuart monarchy, attacks the verbal excesses of the preceding period (concentrated into Elizabethen drama) and calls for kinds of writing that are polished, conversible, urbane, elegant, in a word, polite. Progress in the arts here dictates a return to Horace and Virgil, bypassing Shakespeare and downplaying the Greeks. Stuart interests at this time were consonant with the moderation of inflamed oratory. In the next generation, his grandfather's Whig revolution having been largely effected, it is the third Earl of Shaftesbury's turn to write against enthusiasm and false eloquence (e.g., in the "Letter concerning Enthusiasm") and to advocate a polite and mannered style.

Without denying that eloquence did come to serve in the period 1720–1740 as an Opposition shibboleth, we nevertheless need to ask whether the history of eighteenth-century rhetoric is best narrated through a dialectical interplay of politicized and gendered tropes (eloquence and politeness), staging the same ideological opposition whether found in critical essays by skeptical philosophers, mock epics, verse satires, elegies, sentimental novels, heroic romances, or classroom rhetorics.

Finally, *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume*, asks to be read as an "exposé of the power relations that lie at the heart of politeness" (18). But what if rhetoric, conceived outside an aesthetic framework, teaches politeness as one of several tactics that may be used to gain power? What if what Hume does when he recasts his precise philosophy in polite essays is not an "implicit 'Emily Post-ism'" (87), but instead is an attempt to extend the techniques of Enlightenment skepticism (historicism, the critique of necessary connection) to new readers, especially women? Predictably, Potkay compares these attempts to popularize difficult concepts and methodologies to a retrograde "fair-sexing" of male discourse. In the implicit view that "feminine" genres were somehow more accessible, passionless, and polite, he finds a justification for invoking Thomas Lacquer's "contention that mid-eighteenth-century medical literature . . . ceased to regard the female orgasm as relevant

to generation" (81n). Just as he cannot take Pope's Henley seriously, so here Potkay must ridicule the historical role "polite" or familiar genres played in diffusing cultural literacy. In *Rasselas*, when Pekuah and the Princess save the mad astronomer through conversation, they are not repeating an ideology of politeness, as Potkay maintains, but are instead setting forth a pedagogy by means of generic mediation, leading the astronomer from where he falsely believed power lies, in the discursive isolation of his own imagination, to an arena where he might exercise his intellect to effect. What are the "politics" of a kind of historicism that casts vague aspersions on the pedagogical effort to diffuse difficult knowledge to new readers through conversational genres? Is this an exposé of power relations or an obfuscation of them?

The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume is a book that will prompt new studies of rhetoric in the eighteenth century; in its scholarship, if not in its theorizing, it is an important work.

Boston University Michael Prince

The Power of Lies: Transgression in Victorian Fiction by John Kucich. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995. Pp. 304. $39.95, cloth; $15.95, paper.

The sociology of knowledge continues to provide fruitful lines of inquiry for literary critics. Alexander Welsh's *George Eliot and Blackmail* (1985), D. A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* (1988), and W. David Shaw's *Victorians and Mystery: Crises of Representation* (1990) are among the precursors to the book under review which have usefully engaged Foucault, Bourdieu, Simmel and others to address literary practices as means of distributing symbolic power. Distinct from studies such as Nina Auerbach's *Private Theatricals* (1990), Kucich's book considers deceit not as a form of higher truth but, by maintaining truth and lies as separate ethical categories, as an "arbitrary overcoding of one forbidden aspect of experience with psychic value" (31). Building on the Bakhtinian and psychoanalytic account of transgression developed by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986), Kucich argues that "the transgression of distinctions between honesty and dishonesty was pivotal in struggles for middle-class cultural authority" (37).

Notorious for both earnestness and hypocrisy, the Victorian bourgeoisie affords ample material for a consideration of the power of lies. Kucich remarks that lying has, however, been overlooked as a viable mechanism of resistance against institutional technologies of truth by Foucauldians who collapse confession into economies of power. At the same time, Kucich recalls the bourgeois habit of stigmatizing women, foreigners, and the working class as liars. Through readings of three pairs of writers—Anthony Trollope and Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell and Ellen Wood, and Thomas Hardy and Sarah Grand—Kucich describes the diverse motives for appropriating the symbolic power of lies and its consequences for various groups within and outside the bourgeoisie.

The book's first pairing of Trollope and Collins best illustrates Kucich's method of argument. Choosing writers long thought to represent respectively the quintessence of middle-class stodginess and subversive deviance, Kucich demonstrates their common effort to define a bourgeois elite whose moral sophistication proceeds from transgressive deceit. Kucich's goal, however, is not to reduce their alleged differences to political insignificance, but rather to refine our appreciation of what distinguishes Trollope from Collins.

With evidence drawn from a range of Trollope's novels as well as his autobiography, Kucich argues that Trollope negotiates the conflict in bourgeois ideology between the disinterest required for trustworthiness and the desire required for social mobility, capitalist expansion, and sexual relations by recuperating lying for an anti-bourgeois elite. At the same time Trollope demonstrates his commitment to honesty as a moral and aesthetic virtue and disparages overtly self-interested mendacity, he likewise mocks gullibility and slavish adherence to absolute rules of honesty and associates moral sophistication with the ability to transgress such rules by "disinterested dishonesty." Lucy Robarts's falsehoods in *Framley Parsonage*, presented as signs of charming selflessness rather than ambition, are paradigmatic of the behavior of the Trollopean elite, whose moral authority is based in the exercise of transgressive desire. Adducing Stallybrass and White, Kucich claims that the recuperation of transgressive energies, which have been projected onto other groups, not only characterizes bourgeois identity, but is an instrument in intraclass warfare.

Wilkie Collins shares with Trollope the desire to distinguish an elite group within bourgeois culture, according to Kucich. This view of Collins departs from that of critics such as U. C. Knoepflmacher and Winifred Hughes on the one hand, who have construed Collins as challenging middle-class conventions, and critics including Nancy Armstrong and D. A. Miller on the other, who have more recently emphasized the disciplinary function of Victorian fiction. Kucich wishes to attend to the symbolic strategy of Collins's public identification with outsider status by comparison with Trollope's affiliation with insiders. Collins repeatedly opposes "cultural intellectuals" to legal, medical, and other professionals in order to demonstrate that not only can intellectuals master professional standards of probity, but, by virtue of their superior aesthetic powers, surpass other bourgeois in their abilities to detect deception and reveal suppressed narratives. Collins' anti-professionalism qualifies him as a critic of the institutional markers of legitimacy, but the transgressions of his protagonists, most notably Walter in *The Woman in White*, are not oppositional, but accomplish the justice the law cannot. Their outsider status, especially in its characteristic suspicion, enables cultural intellectuals "to see and tell what professional 'insiders' most want to know" (118).

Gender is clearly significant in Trollope's and Collins's treatments of lying, as Kucich notes, and he focuses specifically on gender in chapters on Elizabeth Gaskell and Ellen Wood. Their principal difference, as Kucich sees it, is that "Gaskell was able to adapt middle-class concepts of transgression for purposes of sexual reform, while Wood tended to protest—without supplying an alternative—against the class-bound options such transgression seemed to leave for women" (122). Acknowledging that Gaskell maintains a

strictly gendered division of moral conduct, Kucich argues that attention to significant—though exceptional—examples wherein Gaskell presents inversions as productive rather than pathological enables readers to appreciate how the conflicts within bourgeois culture themselves invite transgressions on the part of Victorian women. Lies, half-truths, suppressed truths, figure prominently in Gaskell's plots, but they do not seem particularly essential to the conclusion Kucich draws from his subtle analyses of Gaskell's gender reforms. Beyond the "softening" of Mr. Thornton and the "strengthening" of Mary Barton, and the pathological weakness of Philip Hepburn and strength of Miss Jenkyns, Kucich draws our attention to the culture of *Cranford*, in which "male and female characters together reverse the extended sexual hierarchy that equates verbal dependability with disinterested male public power and finesse with private feminine diplomacy" (152). Polite pretense, tact, and reticence—what Kucich terms "lies of omission"—simply lack ethical significance commensurate with statements contrary to fact, or the suppression of evidence. Kucich's gendered ethical categories take a lot of elaborating, qualifying, inverting, and re-qualifying to arrive at a fairly modest claim, but critics who have opted for more celebratory or disparaging statements on Gaskell's politics have not always read as judiciously.

Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* returns to many of the concerns regarding professional ethics and intraclass conflicts raised in Kucich's chapters on Trollope and Collins, with the result that the categories of honesty and dishonesty developed there transfer readily and highlight gender as it inflects class. *East Lynne* opens with the sale of property by an aristocrat to a professional, the lawyer Carlyle, and its plot hinges on the consequences of Carlyle's marriage to the aristocrat's daughter, Isabel. Kucich reads Carlyle as an embodiment of the encroaching power of professionals through their expanding claims of expertise. Women cannot be empowered as truth-tellers or liars if they are barred from discourse by experts asserting exclusive rights to all areas of experience, from contracts to the detection of crime to child rearing. In the face of such exclusion, Wood presents two disastrous alternatives for women: the destruction of traditional maternal authority or women's complicity with the professional mentality.

Thomas Hardy and Sarah Grand, Kucich argues, responded to such crises of representation not by rejecting Victorian ethics outright. Instead, Hardy and Grand produced "deformations" made up of the "discursive debris" of Victorian ethics (Kucich locates "deformation" in Stallybrass and White's model of historica1 transformation as following fragmentation, and prior to marginalization and sublimation), in order to perform unfamiliar ideological work. Many of Kucich's conclusions regarding Hardy and Grand are quite familiar; one should hardly demand radical departures from the general consensus on such extensively studied novels as *Tess* and *Jude*. Rather, Kucich aims to alert us to an unfamiliar genealogy for Hardy's masculinist aesthetics and Grand's radical moral experimentation that restores the symbolic power of truth-telling discourses, largely absent from our own critical discussions of "violence, domination, and otherness."

Kucich argues that Hardy's position develops out of his adherence to the Victorian equation between dishonesty and desire—sexual and social. As sexual desire came to be understood according to deterministic models,

questions of intentionality became vexed and "the moral axis of honesty and dishonesty hopelessly problematic" (207). In *The Well-Beloved* (1897 version), *Tess*, and *Jude*, desire leads inevitably to betrayal and only the artist can escape desire, even that of the famously appropriative masculine gaze identified in Hardy's novels by Kaja Silverman, Penny Boumehla, and Rosemarie Morgan. Kucich claims that Hardy doubles the male gaze, projecting mendacity onto the social and sexual desires of female characters, granting moments of disinterested observation to male characters (e.g., Jude viewing Arabella with "the eye of a dazed philosopher"), and removing the sexually coded observer/artist to a position of true aesthetic perception, distinctive of modernism.

New Woman novelists, like Sarah Grand, faced an impasse—both political and aesthetic—identified in Wood's fiction, and exacerbated by the growing modernist identification of traditionally feminine qualities, such as sentiment, with falsehood. Grand's fiction embraces contradictory formulations of feminist ethics, advocating on the one hand a version of Victorian male honor and authority accomplished by female triumph over sexual self-interest and on the other a notion of identity as performative, enabling women to appropriate the symbolic power of transgressive lying. Grand could not finesse the contradiction that critics have charged mars *The Heavenly Twins*, *The Beth Book*, and *Ideala*, because, Kucich argues, it would have been impossible for her to ignore the persistent equations between honesty and authority, dishonesty and women, as well as the dilemma these equations posed for feminism. Kucich considers Beth to be Grand's best attempt at synthesizing opposing values, a character who, despite her pious frauds, can declare "I am always in earnest." This seems to be, however, not so much an example of transgressive lying, but of lying in service of a higher truth, such as one finds in the analyses of masked selves—Auerbach's, for example—against which Kucich defines his own argument. Nevertheless, Kucich raises important questions for current theories which reproduce the Victorian habit of "surrendering issues of truth-telling in art to men" (202).

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Allegories of America: Narratives, Metaphysics, Politics by Frederick M. Dolan. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994. Pp. x + 232. $36.50, cloth; $15.95, paper.

Frederick Dolan announces his conception of *Allegories of America: Narratives, Metaphysics, Politics* with the statement that the

> themes I explore in this book [are] . . . the spaces opened up for power in an interpretively open world; the latent metaphysics of a politics entirely given over to phantasms and simulacra but whose actors are driven by the need to reduce the interpretive ambiguity of their world to the reassuring forms of a metaphysical allegory; the affirmation of America as a privileged locus of such experiences; and the indispensa-

> bility of fiction for registering the complex ironies generated by this situation. . . . Holding these readings together is the conviction that such discourses allegorize the central problematic that post-Nietzschean and post-Heideggerian reflection offers to political theory: that of speaking, acting, and judging 'without grounds,' the withering away of transcendental normative principles invoked to anchor political actions, judgments, opinion." (2–3)

Chapter 1, "The Fiction of America," gives a reading of John Winthrop's sermon, "A Modell of Christian Charity," based in part on the work of Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. The sermon is taken to depict the yet-to-be-found "America" of Winthrop's company in terms of the rhetorical tradition of his time, as understood by a certain tradition of our own time, passing through Nietzsche, Heidegger, and deconstruction. Chapter 2, "America's Critique of Reason," presents a reading of some of the anti-Federalist documents in the debate over the U. S. Constitution. Dolan brings Habermas into his account at this point (as well as Sloterdijk and Žižek), to discuss what he calls the "Newtonian rationality of the Federalists" on the one hand, and the "hermeneutics of suspicion of the anti-Federalists," on the other hand. Dolan wishes to demonstrate "the unavoidability of fictions in opening up and preserving public spaces and [to expose] the dilemmas posed by the idea of a democratic public sphere." The third chapter, "Cold War Metaphysics," is devoted to the often-noted observation that much of the writing about America during the Cold War was allegorical. Although allegory is an ancient practice, Dolan diagnoses it in this case as post-modern and "metaphysical because it is organized around what Derrida calls 'fear of writing,' that is, the anxiety provoked by the effects of nonobligated or unmotivated linguistic signs."

Chapter 4 "Fiction and the Dilemma of Postmodern Politics" is a reading of the later works of William Burroughs and James Merrill. "This chapter asks what it would mean to take their fiction seriously as thought and philosophy, its guiding question being Habermas's distinction between 'serious' and 'fictive' discourse." The last chapter of *Allegories of America*, "Practicing Political Theory Otherwise," is a reading of Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution*. "Through the figure of Arendt's reflections on the American Revolution, this chapter reflects on the inner and mutually illuminating relationships among and between the workings of foundationalist metaphysics, the practice of political theory, and the question of America" (8–10).

Dolan's chapter on literature—the chapter that will be of most interest to readers of Criticism—seeks the typicality of postwar literature in the United States in the later works of Burroughs and Merrill. A narrative that moves from Winthrop to Merrill is sufficiently unusual as to merit some consideration as to its terms. Dolan sees a logic in this progression taking his stand with the deconstructionists against Habermas (as he sees them): "Against th[e] Habermasian argument, deconstructionists point to the way in which the allegedly serious, literal discourses of everyday life are in fact permeated with symbolic, fictional constructs and conventional, ritualized meanings. If the communication of a meaning demands linguistic convention, then all communication is play-acting, all meaning fictional, all reason "mere" con-

vention" (114–15). A reader is puzzled to know what it may mean, when reading Burroughs and Merrill, "to take their fiction seriously as thought and philosophy." And it may be asked, why just those? But then we note Dolan's belief that "Burroughs's strategy . . . is based on a claim about the nature of authority and its undoing that resembles, in essential respects, de Man's in *The Resistance to Theory*: authority depends on the fiction of reference or meaning, and authority can be undone, therefore, by exploding such fictions, not by producing a new myth or reality—telling yet another story—but by making clear the fictitious character of reality as a narrative process and so making language useless for purposes of domination . . ." (124). The association of Burroughs with de Man, it seems, is a rhetorical strategy meant to invest the former with the authority of the latter. Novels that appear to be mannered efforts at comic pornography can be read as libertine works, Sadean projects to liberate the—white, male, leisured—individual from the demands of the State. The savage misogyny of these *Boys Life* cartoons can become representative of the Nietzschean therapeutic. In the same way, Merrill, who appears as an inadequate descendent, perhaps, of Wallace Stevens, becomes something much more to the political point. Dolan writes, apparently without irony, that "The distinction between the elite soul densities who perform 'V Work' and the animal souls who merely live and die without a trace . . . plays in Merrill's poem essentially the same role as the one Arendt assigns to her distinction between Action and labor, namely, action (political action) that enables the construction of a durable . . . identity, and action (social action) that has no end beyond that of sheer reproduction" (153). Here a radically anti-democratic world view is authorized by reference to a theoretician of revolution.

Arendt is popular enough now. In what used to be called Central Europe, her *Human Condition* has replaced *Capital* as a sacred, unread text. Her distinctions between work and labor, on the one hand, and action and contemplation, on the other, are partially classical, and partially a contribution for our own time. She was a sociologist of politics, deeply rooted in the Germany of her youth and as marked by the France of the Third Republic as by mid-century America. She saw political structures as dynamic, flowing—in her time all too often ebbing—so that the areas of human action contract from the full humanity of the tripartite arena for action composed of the political, the social, and the intimate, to that collapse of public life into the intimate itself that she took to be characteristic of totalitarian societies. It is not too much to say that this process was for her an essential part of the great tragedy of our century. She viewed post-war developments in Germany with mingled hope and skepticism, as her homeland struggled to re-establish first social then political institutions. She did not live long enough to see the same process take place in the former areas of actually existing socialism. It is difficult to believe that there is anything in Arendt's thought comparable to the essentialist elitism of Merrill, to believe that she would be anything other than appalled by association with his views.

Dolan's essay on literary matters is puzzling, odd in its choice of authors, odd in its judgment about them, odd in its associations. These matters seem to be inherent in his understanding of the method of deconstruction. We have become familiar with the way in which the communication of ideas,

methods, and theories from one tradition to another can be distorted by a characteristic type of noise in the system, the habit of imagining that the ideas in question are familiar, the problems dealt with by the theories are familiar, and the methods, if novel, are autonomous, easily transferred to new questions, new problems. Wittgenstein appeared in Cambridge as one more logician, working his way through Russell's questions and problems, developing strikingly novel methods that seemed to bring into being an entirely new "turn" in English philosophy: that associated with Ordinary Language Analysis, the English version of the linguistic turn of twentieth-century thought. And yet it now appears that Wittgenstein was not simply one more English logician, that his thought was not moving in the channel Russell had marked out for it, that he was, as should always have been obvious, a philosopher in the Viennese tradition, concerned with questions that were not questions in Cambridge, working out methods to apply to problems that were not problems in Cambridge. This is not to say that postwar English philosophy was simply a misunderstanding, but it is to say that there must have been some very compelling cultural or ideological reason to accept the results, as startling as they were, of adopting a methodology that was taken as rejecting wholesale the entire classical tradition. There is not a problem in principle in the transfer of a theory or method from one culture or field to another. There are times when this can be quite fruitful. Those engaging in such transfers have a scholarly responsibility to be aware of the original context and use of the theory, and to consider just why such a graft becomes attractive in the new context, how the change in context affects the use of the theory or method, what there is about the moment that demands just this importation.

It is possible that the American reception of deconstruction merits considerations of this order. French university students can be expected to have read certain set texts: Plato, Descartes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche; Rousseau, Montesquieu. French philosophers can assume this background, and not another, and with it can assume a focus on certain questions, a preference for certain methods, a valuation of certain intellectual styles. In France, a philosophy of puns will appeal to those who understand the puns, offer some amusement, perhaps some insights, as an addition to, not as a replacement for, a certain dialectical tradition. But puns do not translate well, playfulness becomes doctrinaire in a foreign language, and the commonplace that much of communication takes a shared linguistic form can become a blinding intellectual nihilism. Derrida is, as is well-known, a man of the Left, and in France his work is part of a dialogue with Sartre, de Beauvoir, Lacan, Althusser, and their successors. But in the United States, it sometimes has been heard as a monologue, a pre-emption of critique; as naturalized by De Man and others, it can be an elision of categories, a machine, like a certain degradation of Ordinary Language Analysis itself, for entertainments in the seminar room. In literary studies in the United States, deconstruction has been used by some as an alternative to methods that seek historical and cultural contexts for their work. Applying it in this way to political science brings to mind Walter Benjamin's observation about the aesthetization of politics.

Dolan's *Allegories of America* is valuable for its readings of Winthrop and the anti-federalists. The method of deconstruction is powerful, in context, and properly applied, cast a strong light on the commonalties of all discourse. But it is possible to be misled by it, to apply it in ways that are less than fruitful, to arrive, however inadvertently, at an intellectual nihilism that is, in the end, merely provocative.

The American Council of Learned Societies Michael Holzman

A. M. Klein: The Story of the Poet by Zailig Pollock. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1994. Pp. 336. $60.00, cloth; $25.95, paper.

It is not uncommon for criticism of contemporary literature to favor authors who perform fashionable gestures that identify them with some easily recognized school. To discriminate between quality and fashion requires effort and gets no reward. The result is that fine authors can be buried under the journalism that often passes for criticism of modern writing. Among overrated Jewish writers are the embarrassing Isaac Bashevis Singer and the tiresome Edmond Jabès, admired by Derrida. In criticism of Anglophone Canadian literature we find endless accolades to the mediocre fiction of Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies; in French-Canadian literature, Nicole Brossard is seen as appropriately trendy. Meanwhile, the extraordinary proto-"language poet" Claude Gauvreau is entirely ignored, as is the powerful playwright and novelist Michel Tremblay.

It may be time to repeal Northrop Frye's verdict on Canadian literature, pronounced in 1965: ". . . Canada has produced no author who is a classic in the sense of possessing a vision greater in kind than that of his best readers. . . . There is no Canadian writer of whom we can say what we can say of the world's major writers, that their readers can grow up inside their work without ever being aware of a circumference." (*The Bush Garden* [Toronto: Anansi, 1971], 213–14). If it is in fact time to repeal this verdict, though, it is still not entirely clear who should be nominated for the space that Frye left vacant. A. M. Klein is one possible candidate for that place.

Not that Klein ever achieved great popularity, or has even maintained the degree of popularity that he did once have. The University of Toronto Press has been engaged for years in the publication of his voluminous works, meticulously edited and exhaustively annotated. Nevertheless, a recent check of four Toronto bookstores, including the University's own, failed to turn up a single title by Klein. One begins to think that what Harry Levin once said of Ben Jonson might be applied, with appropriate modifications, to A. M. Klein: "Ben Jonson's position, 300 years after his death, is more than secure; it might almost be called impregnable. He is still the greatest unread English author" (*Ben Jonson: Selected Works* [New York: Random House, 1938], 1). The public response that Klein thought, perhaps unjustly, he had failed to elicit during his lifetime, still seems beyond his grasp. Yet Coleridge was little

read before Kathleen Coburn's magisterial edition appeared; perhaps some similar transformation will take place in the reception of A. M. Klein.

How good a writer is Klein? Louis Dudek thought the Toronto edition was overkill, not worth the enormous effort it has entailed. Pollock's *A. M. Klein: The Story of the Poet* tries to identify a single pattern in everything that Klein wrote: for such an enterprise, of course, every fragment, even the proverbial laundry list, becomes important. But is Klein necessarily a greater writer if it can be proven that there is a dominant pattern in his writing? Whatever the unity of Klein's work, there is also a recurrent sort of nattering in it, a bit like Keats's, that one may eventually find annoying. (To be sure, his dreadful Grub Street existence gave Klein ample justification for bitterness and complaint.) But a reader may remain with a lingering discontent that does not only reflect Klein's personal unhappiness, or even his noble discontent with the inaccessibility of his goals. To admit the worst that can be said of Klein, his work can leave one more irritated than intrigued; his ideas may seem serious but not profound.

It is a great virtue of Pollock's study that it does not indulge in careless praise. It is a book worked out in extraordinary detail, as I have said, to demonstrate a particular pattern in Klein's writing, and it is quick to point out the difficulties in which that pattern involves the poet. I will try to repeat this pattern as Pollock traces it. The unrolling of the (Torah) scroll leads towards truth, but never reaches it. Similarly, every dialectical process falls short of synthesis. The moment of suspense that follows this realization, the realization that completeness cannot be achieved, reveals an inherent flaw in the interpretive commentary in which both the artist, the Talmudist, and the philosopher are engaged. This pause, or rather the gap at the brink of consummation (for instance, the moment at which the artist expects to achieve symbiosis with his community), may in theory be leaped, but it can certainly never be bridged. The assumption that effort alone will lead one to the goal turns out to have been a mistake. In this light, the entire labour of Klein's difficult life is seen as if caught in a Kakaesque aporia, in a straining towards what in principle cannot be achieved. Where the pattern that Pollock finds in Klein differs from Kafka's is in its final phase; the effort to unroll the scroll is not maintained in the face of all discouragement, but is simply abandoned; the futile striving to reach the goal is given up; in fact, what ensues is an impulse to roll the scroll backwards, even to undo the consequences of the creative life; in fact, to negate the entire creative process.

Despite its scholarly density, then, Pollock's account of the growth—and decline—of a poet's mind is to be read almost like a detective story: if one pays enough attention to the details, if one watches the permutations of "scroll," "dialectic," "oneness," and other such key words with unwavering attention, one will finally see how the pattern dominates and accounts for everything of importance that Klein wrote. It is an approach that, perhaps consciously, mimics the notorious paranoia of its subject, but it is also reasonably convincing and very satisfying, though it demands a degree of commitment to Pollock's argument that soon becomes exhausting.

There is great value in this discriminating approach of Pollock's to the interpretation of Klein. First, it makes Pollock hesitant to approve unconditionally of anything that Klein wrote, and so rescues Klein from the uncritical

praise that can mask an author's idiosyncratic values. Second, it forces us to ask why an author who is suspended in a self-created limbo of imperfection can remain so compelling. The answer is clear: to attempt the impossible represents a noble effort. That is why Klein, much of whose writing is unreadable, moves us far more than most of the Canadian poets of his generation. We can feel in even his most awkward gestures, in his declamatory rhetoric, an unbroken seriousness of purpose.

Pollock holds Klein to his own impossibly high standards, rejecting even his most satisfying poems (such as the three "Mount Royal" poems) as tainted with escapism (192–94). They achieve their lyric perfection by avoiding certain harsh political realities. Not for a moment will Pollock hide behind such obvious assets of Klein's style as his enormous multilingual vocabulary. Neither does he pretend that Klein's pioneering appreciation of Joyce and Hopkins exempts him from the ultimate demands of his own enterprise; nor does he find excuses for Klein's weaknesses in the terrible, draining and humiliating conditions under which he worked—conditions that, allowing for the differences, actually recall those under which Hopkins laboured.

There will, no doubt, eventually be a biography that will provide more than scattered glimpses of this tormented existence. Klein attended the same primary and secondary schools as well as the same college as I did (somewhat later), and he was a close friend of my mother's. (Concerning my mother, Ida Maza, see my *Identity and Community* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994]). I knew his daughter, who died very young, when she was a student at McGill, but I have only two strong impressions of meeting with Klein himself. The first time was on the Park Avenue streetcar, returning from downtown. He was seated, and I remember his slightly smiling, dark, swarthy face. We exchanged small-talk, while I kept wondering how someone who was thought to be subject to mental illness could continue practicing law.

> In layers of mountains the history of mankind,
> and in Mount Royal
> which daily in a streetcar I surround
> my youth, my childhood—
> the pissabed dandelion, the coolie acorn,—
> - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
> are still to be found.
> ("The Mountain," 7–11, 14)

The second memory I have is of visiting Klein, who was now clearly understood to be ill, with my mother at his apartment. His wife was present. After some general conversation and some of a literary nature, Klein began to tell me about the schemes and machinations of the people upstairs, and how (with a knowing smile) he would foil them. Klein's "Psalm xxii: A Prayer of Abraham, against Madness" is a poor poem, and it gives one little sense of what his own later experience may have been like; but it reflects what must have been a constant preoccupation.

Pollock identifies "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" as Klein's most im-

portant poem, or, at least, as the one that defines Klein's role as poet most clearly. Pollock contrasts it (159 ff.) with the earlier "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," in which Spinoza's, the poet's model's, confident assertion of God's unity and perfection is unequivocal.

> Think of Spinoza, rather, plucking tulips
> Within the garden of Mynheer, forgetting
> Dutchmen and Rabbins, and consumptive fretting,
> Picking his tulips in the Holland sun,
> Remembering the thought of the Adored,
> Spinoza, gathering flowers for the One,
> The ever-unwedded lover of the Lord.
>
> (Last stanza)

The tone of the "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" is more ambiguous, or what Pollock would call more "dialectical." From the point of view of his community, the poet is now, at best, "a Mr. Smith in a hotel register" (27). But he himself remembers the beginning of his love affair with language, "his travels over that body—/ the torso verb, the beautiful face of the noun" (41–42) and thinks perhaps he may still be brought into his own—"the unsuspecting heir, with papers" (56), but it doesn't happen, and whatever his fears and his illusions,

> it is stark infelicity
> which stirs him from his sleep, undressed, asleep
> to walk upon roofs and window-sills. . . .
>
> (130–32)

Still, he will carry out his role: to praise and so to recreate the world, like another Christopher Smart or Rilke: "Until it has been praised, that part/ has not been" (142–43). He climbs up on another planet to look down on this new earth of his, himself: "and this,/ this, he would like to write down in a book!" (151–52). Like Wordsworth, a perpetual debtor, he is desperate to "O, somehow pay back the daily larcenies of the lung!" (158). With much justification, he states

> These are not mean ambitions. It is already something
> merely to entertain them. Meanwhile, he
> makes of his status zero a rich garland . . . . (159–61)

In a more playful mood, Klein can also write poems about refrigerators—"A bevy of milk, coifed like the sisters of snow" ("Frigidaire," 10) or, for that matter, about grain elevators, where lie

> the scruples of the sun
> garnered for darkness;
> . . . . . .
> the grain picked up, like tic-tacs out of time:
> first one; an other. . . .
>
> ("Grain Elevator," 11–12, 18–19)

But I find myself returning most consistently to the "Mount Royal" poems,

of which there are three. Escapist or subtly evasive they may be; but (*pace* Pollock) perhaps that does not disqualify them as poetry.

> Remembering boyhood, it is always here
> the boy in blouse and kneepants on the road
> trailing his stick over the hopscotched sun;
> or here, upon the suddenly moving hill;
> or at the turned tap its cold white mandarin mustaches;
> ("Lookout: Mount Royal," 1–5)

On a winter night a sleigh passes, and

> One would say the hidden stars were bells
> dangling between the shafts of the zodiac.
> One would say
> the snowflakes falling clinked together their sparkles
> to make these soft, these satin-muffled
> tintinnabulations.
> ("Winter Night: Mount Royal," 26–31)

In summer there are, on this mountain, buttercups that

> like once on the under of my chin
> upon my heart still throw their rounds of yellow.
> . . . . . .
> One of these days I shall go up to the second terrace
> to see if it is still there—
> the uncomfortable sentimental bench
> where—as we listened to the brass of the band concerts
> made soft and to our mood by dark and distance
> I told the girl I loved
> I loved her.
> ("The Mountain," 16–17, 37–43)

Yet, elsewhere, Klein can reject memory, and declare that "No thing is what I vividly recall—" ("Of Remembrance," 24); and he is capable of harsh, immediate, and practical poetry, without a trace of nostalgia. In fact, some of his best passages are to be found in the workmanlike poems about Quebec politics, notably "Political Meeting: (For Camilien Houde)." (For a commentary on this poem see Pollock, 185–89). The demagogue rallies his xenophobic crowd, until

> (Outside, in the dark, the street is body-tall,
> flowered with faces intent on the scarecrow thing
> that shouts . . . .)
> (15–17)

Political correctness goes, and poetry tells it like it is:

> The whole street wears one face,
> shadowed and grim; and in the darkness rises
> the body-odour of race.
> (38–40)

A variant of this same theme appears, expressed in gentler language, in "The Provinces" (lines 50–51): "the unity/ in the family feature, the not unsimilar face."

It may be fairly said that Klein's major preoccupation is with community; and, as Pollock points out, Klein's attack on Houde does not preclude a strong identification with the communitarian values and experience of French Canadians. The "body odour of race" is a reality; it is the flavor through which the solidarity of a group is experienced. In that case it may have been, in fact it was, directly threatening to another group, the one that Klein represented; but it is nevertheless the basic means of identification: the smell of those we belong with, that keeps others at arm's length. Mild-mannered, inoffensive, and even sentimental as Klein at times seemed to be, he was yet able to call by its name, and thrust in our faces, the defining feature of our time.

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Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies edited by Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995. Pp. 304. $28.50.

This volume, consisting of an introduction and ten essays, is the first attempt to evaluate the impact of feminist scholarship on a number of the academic fields encompassed by the rubric "Jewish studies." In each instance the essays' authors address the state of knowledge about women and gender in their specific areas, consider the influence of such scholarship on the discipline in general, and suggest new avenues for research. The academic areas discussed are biblical studies, rabbinic Judaism, Jewish theology, Jewish philosophy, modern Jewish history, sociology of American Jews, anthropology, American-Jewish literature, modern Hebrew literature, and American cinema.

As the editors and authors of the essays in this provocative volume point out frequently, women's studies and Jewish studies are analogous disciplines both in their critical approaches to traditional knowledge, and in their status in the academic world. That the parameters of women's history and experience, and Jewish history and experience, respectively, often differ from those associated with the dominant men from whose point of view western history has generally been written, is a significant point of correspondence. Similarly, the historical periodizations that characterize general cultural studies are not always meaningful either for Jews or for women. Moreover, efforts over the past few decades to introduce Jewish studies into the mainstream liberal arts curriculum are analogous to similar endeavors vis-à-vis women's studies. In both cases, the passage from marginal and parochial to an accepted place in the academic pantheon has been hesitant and halting, even in an academic atmosphere celebratory of cultural diversity.

Given this commonality of situation, it might appear surprising that the impact of feminist insights on many areas of Jewish Studies scholarship has

so far been minor. However, as this volume reveals, the lack of integration of feminist perspectives has to do both with the conservative and almost hermetic nature of many areas of Jewish studies, several of which are significantly removed from the major theoretical discourses of the mainstreams of their fields, as well as with traditional negative Jewish attitudes towards women and learning. Rabbinic Judaism, which held sway over most Jewish communities from the sixth through the eighteenth century of our era, ordained rigid separations between male and female roles, and the status which pertains to each sex. In this patriarchal system, women were seen as connected to the realm of nature, as opposed to culture, and their activities were ideally confined to the private sphere of family and economic endeavors. Jewish scholarship has almost always been written and taught from the point of view of the male Jew, and has accordingly documented his intellectual concerns and achievements. In the most traditional fields of study discussed in this volume, such as rabbinics, Jewish philosophy, and the sociology of American Jews, and in academic studies in Israel in general, feminist approaches and concerns have thus far had virtually no impact.

In other academic disciplines, too, interest in evaluating the role of gender as a category of analysis in studying Jewish social, economic, intellectual, or religious life, has come slowly. The nascent feminist critiques of traditional understandings of Jewish society, religion, and culture which have emerged are mainly a result of the increasing number of women who have entered various fields of Jewish scholarship in the past two decades, and of their receptivity to the concurrent growth of women's studies as a field of scholarly endeavor that has convincingly demonstrated that gender is an essential consideration in analyzing all aspects of human experience.

In several instances, in fact, the major impetus towards gendered analyses of Jewish societies and texts has come from active feminist scholarship in the mainstreams of the fields under consideration. This is especially so in disciplines such as Jewish feminist theology, discussed in this volume by Judith Plaskow, which has been significantly shaped in reaction to Christian feminist theology, and in biblical studies, where, as Tikva Frymer-Kensky points out, a variety of new voices—Catholics, Jews, Asians, Afro-Americans, Africans, and women—have brought about new ways of reading the Hebrew Bible and have exposed the so-called "objectivity" of earlier, primarily male Protestant scholars. This general turmoil in biblical studies she writes, has brought about an openness to solid feminist scholarship (16). Similar receptivity is found in anthropology, with the result, according to Susan Sered, that anthropologists of Jewish societies have been far ahead of other Jewish studies scholars in asking serious questions about the implications of gender. She suggests that it is particularly in the still little explored area of investigating Jewish women's particular religious beliefs and rituals that feminist Jewish anthropology will make its greatest contributions (171).

In her essay on "Feminist Studies and Modern Jewish History," Paula Hyman writes that historians of Jewish societies have begun to investigate the ramifications of gender differences in virtually every era of Jewish history. She points, among other examples, to the work of Marion Kaplan who has questioned the commonly held assumption that Jews in imperial Germany assimilated in a uniform way into the broader culture. Kaplan's re-

search finds that assimilation was a process that applied to men more rapidly than to women. By retaining religious traditions in the home, providing their children with religious education, and maintaining kinship and community networks, German Jewish women defined their identities in religious and ethnic terms while the men in their lives were striving for political and economic integration into German society.

Feminist literary criticism has also reshaped the ways in which teachers and students look at literary texts. Joyce Antler and Naomi Sokoloff, in their respective chapters on American-Jewish and Hebrew literatures, both point to the many insights being drawn from mainstream feminist literary theory in contemporary scholarship on American-Jewish and Hebrew writing. They note, for example, the increased scholarly concentration on such dimensions of women's lives as mother/daughter relationships, adolescence, sexuality, and the consequences of male domination, in study of the works of important American-Jewish and Israeli writers. Both mention, too, the growing interest in the significant number of Jewish women who began to write creatively from the raw material of their own experiences and feelings in the past one hundred years. With this opportunity for self-realization came estrangement from a traditional Jewish culture which had strictly limited women's access to learning and literary accomplishment. Many Jewish women writers not only experienced the duality of living as marginalized women in a male-dominated Jewish culture, but also keenly felt the equally significant duality of being part of a Jewish minority in uncongenial cultural environments—often with detrimental results for their creative output.

The essays in *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies* are clearly written and copiously documented. They provide admirable general introductions to the academic fields of Jewish scholarship they discuss, in addition to their detailed analyses of the present impact of feminist scholarship in these disciplines, and the desiderata for future scholarship they offer. This significant collection is part of a growing epistemological effort to acknowledge the consequences of race, ethnicity, social class, and gender on people's lives and on their creative and spiritual endeavors. It will offer valuable insights to all readers interested in the scholarly impact of gender studies on traditional academic disciplines.

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