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Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation by W. J. T. Mitchell. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994. Pp. xv + 445. \$34.95.

Picture Theory might serve as a plump epitome of the Chicago mode of criticism: elaborate, comprehensive, painfully conscientious (in a footnote Mitchell thanks a friend for explaining the joke in a famous *New Yorker* cartoon), and straining to articulate a theory that never quite crystallizes. Mitchell proclaims early and late that "this is a book whose reach far outstrips its grasp" (8), an "incomplete project" (5), without "a visible architectonic" (417). Yet on page 100 he asserts "this book is . . . a theory." His text, moreover, is carefully divided into sections with structuring introductions a bit formal for a "collection of snapshots" (5), that he confesses may demonstrate only "why settled answers of a systematic kind" to what pictures are and how they relate to words "may be impossible," indeed, that he may have compiled an introduction to a discipline "that does not exist and never will" (7). What justifies these inconsistencies, along with the now commonplace practice of calling a "book" what is mostly a reprinting of essays and talks from a variety of diverse occasions, is a determination to be "theoretical." It is "theory," if only unachievable theory, that is satisfied with collecting snapshots rather than struggling to articulate a systematically developmental study—although some readers may be disappointed when a theory climaxes with so resounding an affirmation as "the inescapable heterogeneity of representation" (418).

Whether it is the tendency of theorizing to conclude in banality, or the disingenuousness of Mitchell's disclaimers, or another cause I haven't identified, something impedes the provocativeness Mitchell patently desires for *Picture Theory*. At least for someone like myself who for two decades has been teaching, thinking, and writing about relations of the verbal and the visual, Mitchell's contributions, although often in particulars sensible and interesting, are seldom exciting. My sense of splashing about in shallow water may derive in part from the structuring of most of his essays as responses to what he rightly sees as unsatisfactory theorizing by other critics—with all the usual suspects rounded up. He justly condemns, for example, the vapid circularity of "interart" claims of Wendy Steiner, but does little himself to advance such undertakings.

One reason he can't help me much appears in the chapter "Visible Language: Blake's Art of Writing," an essentially unchanged reprint of a piece written over a decade ago—which means that it ignores the extraordinary transformation in Blakean scholarship of the past several years, especially historical analyses of Blake's engraving/etching practices, some important results of which have appeared in the splendid Princeton edition edited by Eaves, Essick, and Viscomi. That this elision of revisionary research is no oversight but a result of his methodology is displayed by Mitchell's positioning of Blake in opposition to what he terms "romantic antipictorialism." This, he claims, makes intelligible Blake's "graphocentrism" (117). But Mitchell's representation of "romantic antipictorialism" even he calls "a vast oversimplification" (although one may suspect he underestimates how grossly he distorts). He invokes, for example, Abrams's hoary mirror/Neoclassic-lamp/Romantic division in the simplest possible way, ignoring how recent critics,

particularly those concerned with visual-verbal parallels, have been pointing out the many reflections and the few lamps appearing in romantic art. Mitchell further maintains, as if the romantic poets were followers of Pater, that they employ a "regular comparison of poetry with music" (117), which suggests he ought to reread, for starters, Wordsworth's Prefaces and Shelley's *Defence*. Most striking, however, is Mitchell's complete disregard of the picturesque, that popular, infuriating, yet most revealing socio-artistic phenomenon against which all the romantics, including Blake, at one time or another defined their artistic purposes and methods, verbal or visual.

Such historical complexities are for Mitchell elidable, because what matters is a rhetorical structure provided by his "vast oversimplification" enabling him to apply his "imagetext" theory to Blake's art. Mitchell's theorizing commentary, despite re-raising one or two potentially interesting ideas, such as the possible importance of Blake's pictured scrolls, mystifies central issues because it distorts the complicated evolution of Blake's art over a very long career. Mitchell casually leaps, for instance, from the illustrations of *Job* in the late 1820s back to *Songs of Innocence* of 1789, forward to *Jerusalem*, then back to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* of the early 1790s. It is as if a Shakespearean critic treated *The Tempest* and *The Comedy of Errors* as interchangeable—only worse, because the now well-documented changes in Blake's purposes and practices of designing, printing, and coloring of his "illuminations" are supposed to be Mitchell's principal concern. This indifference to specific processes of historical evolution is accentuated by slurrings and blurrings in Mitchell's interpretations. The writing of *Jerusalem*, he tells us, Blake offers as "on the same level as the writing of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai"—which seems dubious in the light of Blake's consistent attitude toward those commandments beginning with *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plates 22–24). Or, to return once more to a problem of "imagetext," Mitchell insists on the importance of *Innocence* being "printed in Roman," whereas *Experience* is "printed in italic," and he goes on to refer to "roman print" and "italic print." Blake of course printed whole *plates*: what we see is italic script or roman script—both are equally calligraphic. The possible confusion may be trivial, yet symptomatic: Mitchell's imposition of ahistorical theory about Blake and books leads him to ignore what scholars as diverse as Darnton and Viscomi have been demonstrating as to how the "book" was conceived and how it functioned socially at the end of the eighteenth-century. (An obverse and equally trivial but symptomatic detail is Mitchell's change of an original essay in which he oversimplified the title of Malevich's famous painting *Painterly Realism: Boy with Knapsack—Color Masses in the Fourth Dimension*; his claim (226) that this is a "new" title for *Suprematist Composition: Red Square and Black Square* arises from his need to justify his anecdote of viewing the painting, but at the cost of probably misleading readers as to which was the picture's original title.)

It makes me uncomfortable to write this way of someone with whom my relations—until now—have been amicable, and ordinarily I would not bother. Shoddy work in our profession normally sinks quickly to its appropriate level. But Mitchell is the editor of a distinguished journal. If humanistic studies are through self-debasing practices losing esteem both among other academics and the general public, established professors bear the re-

sponsibility of rigorously sustaining the credibility of scholarship. There is lavish documentation in this book, but too much of it rings of merely politic citation. One notices that almost never does Mitchell display the true scholar's fascination with the sources of the sources he cites. One can forgive an assistant professor writing hyperbolically under the insane pressure created by contemporary theorizers to produce spectacular originality, but it is depressing when someone in Mitchell's position writes, "I know it is heresy to suggest that Blake could have held any reactionary opinions" (123), the absurdity of the claim in 1994 advertising the intensity of his desire to be seen as "heretical." In fact, officials who rely on the usual suspects are seldom heretics of any kind.

It is a relief, then, to turn to another inadequacy in Mitchell's theory of visual representation, because this is one of which I too am guilty. Mitchell, like most literary critics, is fundamentally insensitive to what goes into the making of pictorial artistry. It is not merely that, as often been said, a writer moves from concept to percept while a visual artist moves from percept to concept, but also that visual artistry depends on hand skills, so that evaluations of finished works ought not to be separated from awareness of processes of material production. My awareness of my own incompetence as a commentator on visual art originated in overhearing the muttered exclamation of my painter companion close to a picture in a gallery we were visiting: "Now why the hell did he use *that* kind of oil?"

The need for a sensitivity Mitchell and I lack (along with a surprising number of art historians, it must be said) is dramatized by Tolstoy's description of the painter Mihailov in *Anna Karenina*, who recovers a sketch from his little daughter and finds it stained by candle grease. Reworking his sketch, he discovers that the grease spot has revealed the correct pose of a figure he had previously struggled in vain to draw. Literary critics may not like it, but this kind of physical "accident" is central to visual art. Good criticism of it ought to begin in an interest in how artifacts are made, what they are made of, and what physically happened in the creating of them. I think the weakness of Mitchell's discussions not merely of well-known paintings, and his chapter on the works of Robert Morris, but even his comments on books of photographs and movies such as *Do The Right Thing* and *JFK*, are disappointing, despite some judicious specific observations, because Mitchell has no interest in making processes. He is in this deficiency, I repeat, not unique: too many film commentators, for example, are unconcerned with what strikes me as the weird—virtually unbelievable—fashion in which movies are constructed. If Heidegger was right, that only in painting are the full realities of colors realized, even as only in sculpture do the genuine qualities of stone appear, one must be suspicious of any theorist of visual representation indifferent to its intrinsic physicalities.

Even more debilitating, but more surprising, is Mitchell's omission of any reference to orality. Granting that contemporary culture is intensely textual (as well as visual), it seems odd to relate verbal and visual without admitting that the verbal originates as sound, an aural—invisible—phenomenon. In the past dozen years, moreover, there has been intense study of oral literatures which should be brought into play here. One may think of scholars like Ong and Goody, but even a critic such as Bakhtin (whom Mitchell also

ignores), although primarily concerned with the novel, has commented cogently, for instance, on the relevant problem in written texts of *intonation*. The problem is that there is no human speech not characterized by specificity of intonations which, exactly because they are not "visible" in a written text, become interpretive foci in fiction.

The paradox I'm left with is that, although Mitchell speaks frequently of the difficulty of addressing in language the problem of systematically defining the essence of visual representation, the effect of his determination always to theorize at whatever cost is to diminish belief in his recognition of the most intractable difficulties in his project. He sees his own principal contribution as an emphasis on what he calls *imagetext*, recognition that all pictorializations are infected with verbal meanings, and that all writing must be perceived as containing a pictorial element. True enough, yet this hardly launches us into intellectual deep water, especially when unsupported by eager breadth of scholarly awareness, despite heavy footnoting and massive listing of acknowledgments. Notably absent from Mitchell's usual suspects, to cite one telling example, is Meyer Schapiro, whose old essay "Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs" happens to have been reprinted just last year. This essay with the modestly elegant specificity of exemplary scholarship illuminatingly explores several of the basic problems of representation which provoke Mitchell's most laborious manipulation of abstractions.

No doubt my dissatisfactions reveal more about my Alzheimerish incapacity to appreciate the dominant style of contemporary academic criticism than about what for some readers will seem *Picture Theory's* accomplishments. I speak with confidence of my limitations, because when struggling in Chapter Ten with Mitchell's relentless schematizings about illusion, I found my mind strangely drifting back to a pre-World War II Charlie Chan movie, in which I remember the Swedish actor who gave a sort of illusion of a pseudo-Chinese detective observing in his characteristically fake Confucian manner: "Theory like mist on eyeglasses. Obscure facts."

Columbia University

Karl Kroeber

The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance by Wendy Wall. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993. Pp. xii + 373. \$42.95, cloth; \$17.95, paper.

This is a simply extraordinary first book: its scope and detail are most impressive, as it raises questions about authorship, technology, genre, gender, class, and politics, while dealing with a number of canonical and noncanonical texts written at a liminal moment in the history of English literature. It is the time when manuscript circulation of poems and other forms of writing, with its collective or anonymous creators, was challenged by the existence of print, the possibility of fixing and monumentalizing a text by a single author.

Scholars have discussed "the stigma of print," deeply felt by Shakespeare's contemporaries, for almost fifty years, but it has remained for our time to investigate the two cultures—manuscript circulation and print—seriously. It would have been difficult to get New Critics, with their reverence for the single-authored text, closely read, and the imperative to publish or perish in the great graduate schools of America, to believe an age in which the social transactions that attended a poem were more important to its author than the work itself. But now that the author has dwindled into the author function, books are seen as commodities, and all have audiences who read from different positions, the issues that Wall addresses are not only thinkable, but fascinating. It is characteristic of Wall's scholarship that she refers to J. W. Saunders' article written in 1951, instead of citing just the latest thing from the new historicists. Her introduction is a full history of how the questions she addresses and how the approaches she uses have developed in the last half century. That practice is carried throughout with scrupulous citation of an enormous body of scholarship.

The class and gender politics of the manuscript-print culture are relatively simple: the pen is virginal and aristocratic; print is promiscuous and vulgar. Printing one's works becomes therefore metaphorically public wantonness, a transgressive act that needed to be negotiated with various strategies. One was to make sonnet sequences into books to be read as they were circulated in coteries, as conversations with participation of lover and beloved, as part of labyrinthine ways of courtship, instead of a clear narrative development. Printed books retained the trappings of manuscripts. They became pseudo-morphs or books which seemed like manuscripts until the authors assumed sufficient authority to become men in print.

The sonnet cycles also placed the reader in the position of the voyeur in relation to the text, a position that suits perfectly the gendered rhetoric of male authors about their printed texts: the text is female; the reader and writer, male. Thus, Renaissance publishing is constructed as an enticing and dangerous cultural event, also one in which the male author risks effeminization, as his text is associated with fallen women.

Wall shows how Spenser and Gascoigne used the *The Shepherd's Calendar* and *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* to impersonate manuscripts early in their careers, and then went on to claim authority in later works. Daniel and Lodge use the complaint, joined to a sonnet sequence: they adopt the very voice of the fallen woman, thereby dislocating gender and blending genres. But all these transitions are negotiated; few took the way of Ben Jonson, to assert authority in print for the most scorned of genres, popular plays.

Wall shows, however, how another aristocratic genre, the pageant, when it is printed, extends its theatricality because what was improvised is inscribed. She demonstrates how two of Elizabeth's courtiers, Sidney and Gascoigne, attempted to coerce their sovereign to take stances favorable to the author's politics. Both failed, and so the author's intent in the pageant was foiled. Then the hoped-for outcome became more securely fixed by the author in print—and certainly monumentalized in the apparatus of the book. Moreover, print brought with it many more claims of bringing immortality to an author and to his subject/object.

If men were ashamed to seek print, women would bring upon themselves double shame to publish their work during the Renaissance. Women's negotiations took very conservative forms in this period: mothers published legacies to their children. Mary Sidney, countess of Pembroke, published certain translations, but never her psalms, which she did prepare to present to the queen at court. Aemelia Lanyer published *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* in 1611, imitating some of Sidney's strategies for making her work public. Another member of the Sidney clan, Lady Mary Wroth, used the strategy of making the author of her sonnet sequence a fiction from *Urania*. Each female author sought her own negotiation within the very narrow band of orthodox behavior.

One learns so much from this book, it seems churlish to criticize, but that is the task of the reviewer. There is more redundancy in the writing than necessary. The arguments are complex and very well developed. But conclusions are repeated a bit too often. The two chapters on the sonnet sequences probably should have been brought together, where the separate points still could have been clearly made, always granting that both points about the sequences are extremely valuable. In reading a really good book, one always ends lusting for more; so I will conclude with gratitude for the smart and provocative book that Wendy Wall has given us.

Wayne State University

Marilyn L. Williamson

Shepherds Devises: Edmund Spenser's Shepherdes Calender and the Institutions of Elizabeth Society by Robert Lane. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1993. Pp. x + 240. \$40.00.

The first thing to be noted about Robert Lane's study is that it pays only fleeting attention to *The Faerie Queene*. Although not explicitly stated by Lane, it soon becomes apparent that he is not interested in tracing the movement of the earlier *Shepherdes Calender* (1579) to the later *Faerie Queene* (1592) as the Virgilian progression from eclogue to epic. Lane is engaged in a rigorous application of an historicist method that examines the material conditions involved in the production and reception of the *Shepherdes Calender*. He argues that Spenser's pastoral poem be seen as a radical, oppositionist work that critiques the "regime" of Elizabeth and two hierarchical institutions of Elizabethan society, the Church and Court. He sets his work against analyses of the poem that are concerned with seeing the *Shepherdes Calender* as inaugurating what has been called the English Renaissance and those which, through an appropriation of biographical material, envision Spenser as the poor scholar at Cambridge, engaged in a lifelong quest to ingratiate himself, through his literary talent, into the patronage circles of an Elizabethan court. He positions his historicist methodology against analyses of the *Calender* that treat the aesthetic as a transcendent category, even when it is considered as historically contingent, as in the recent work of Paul Alpers ("Pastoral and the Domain of Lyric in Spenser's *Shepherdes Calender*," *Representations* 12 [1985]) and Nancy Jo Hoffman (*Spenser's Pastorals: "The She-*

shepherd Calender" and "*Colin Clout*" [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977]). He also opposes the type of contextualist analysis of the *Calender* concerned with the author's biography or with a topical approach to the allegory of the poem that attempts to assign one-to-one correspondences between Spenser's shepherds and real historical personages. Referring specifically to Paul McLane (*Spenser's "Shepherd Calender": A Study in Elizabethan Allegory* [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961]), Lane cites Louis Montrose in calling this kind of investigation literary "detective work" (8n.).

After dismissing formalist and old-historicist criticisms of Spenser's poem quite early in the book, Lane engages recent new historicist work, particularly Stephen Greenblatt's assertion that subversion is always contained and is, in fact, created by the dominant ideology to legitimate its own entrenched power. However useful the new historicist project has been as a palliative to the shortcomings of formalist and old-historicist criticisms, Lane criticizes it for assuming "a status that elides human initiation, rendering social phenomena as the impersonal operation of social or linguistic entities such as 'power' or 'discursive fields' and society itself, finally, as a monolithic structure in which all differences (especially political resistance) turn out to be only incidental variants of a single imperative" (7). Above all, it is human agency that Lane wants to reclaim for Spenser, and his project thus becomes one of demonstrating that Spenser responds to the circulating discourses of Elizabethan ideology and challenges that ideology by "using the same resources it draws on to reach very different conclusions" (74).

It is, of course, impossible in this space to delineate the very thorough argument Lane elaborates to support these "different conclusions," but a brief example should suffice to give a sense of the way he proceeds. During Elizabeth's reign, there was an elaborate image constructed around the Queen as the "mother" of England. This "mother" image and its association with "motherly care" was appropriated by Spenser and used to criticize Elizabeth's regime in two of the eclogues. In the April eclogue, Lane finds a jarring, discordant note, in what is generally considered to be a panegyric to Elizabeth, in the reference to Niobe: "Niobe's combined role as mother and political ruler has affinities with that other metaphor so familiar to Spenser's readers, of the queen as mother of England and its people as her children" (18). The fact that Phoebus and Cynthia, "Latonaes seede," turn Niobe into stone because of her excessive pride serves to undermine the ostensibly laudatory and celebratory tone of the eclogue. In the May eclogue, the metaphor of motherly care is deflated in the fables of a mother goat who abandons her kid for the pursuit of pleasure, unrealistically expecting admonition to serve in place of education, and the mother ape who inadvertently suffocates her "youngling" in a desire to embrace him too closely. Lane engages in similar procedures to demonstrate, successfully I think, that Spenser criticized the Church and Court as well. The picture of Spenser that emerges is consistently one of political resistance.

As further evidence of the *Calender's* subversive nature, Lane cites the poem's dedication to Sidney (who incurred, in 1579, the disfavor of the Queen for advising her against her impending marriage to the duc d'Alençon) and its publication by Hugh Singleton, John Stubbs's printer

(Stubbs forfeited his right hand for publicly doing, in his pamphlet, *The Gaping Gulf*, what Sidney had done in a private letter). Lane also argues that the calendrical form itself—like broadsides and ballads, generally considered a popular medium—and the use of woodcuts to introduce each eclogue for the benefit of the illiterate mark the poem as an oppositionist work directed to a broad audience. Recognizing the populist appeal of the *Calender* forces us to relinquish the notion that it was written only for courtly aristocrats.

Lane suggests that in the highly-charged political atmosphere of 1579 Spenser had to protect himself from the retribution the *Calender's* associations with political resistance might have incited. Spenser does this by employing several devices that enable the poem to engage in political commentary while protecting its author from censorship: the poem's anonymity; commentary of "E.K.," whose reticence or misdirection in glossing certain passages acts as a signpost to the reader that politically controversial issues are being addressed; the use of fable as a cultural commonplace in political critique; and the dialogic structure of the eclogue itself. It might be argued that the cumulative effect of this extensive filtering of Spenser's political critique is to dull the point Lane makes about Spenser as an agent for change. It might also be argued that Spenser adopts literary pastoralism as a way to express sanctioned dissent in order to legitimate hierarchical structures. In response Lane insists that layers of ambiguity for warding off censorship were made necessary by repressive Elizabethan institutions, and populist audiences would have read through the ambiguity, conceiving the pastoral eclogue as a genre appropriate for voicing real dissent.

Lane reopens the familiar conflict between cultural materialism and new historicism about the scope of human agency by refuting the new-historicist description of the function of literary pastoralism. George Puttenham observes that "The Poet devised the Eglogue . . . not of purpose to counterfeit or represent the rustickall manner of loves and communication, but under the vaille of homely persons and in rude speeches to insinuate and glauce at greater matters, and such as perchance had not bene safe to have bene disclosed in any other sort." This suggests that the pastoral eclogue was widely recognized as embodying political critique, and the absence of any systematic crackdown on the authors of pastoral eclogues, by the persons or institutions criticized, implies that pastoral eclogue may have functioned in the service of the dominant culture, a function best described by Montrose: "The primarily courtly pastoral of the Renaissance puts into play a symbolic strategy, which, by reconstituting the leisured gentleman as the gentle shepherd, obfuscates a fundamental contradiction in the cultural logic: a contradiction between the secular claims of aristocratic prerogative and the religious claims of common origins, shared fallenness, and spiritual equality among men, gentle and base alike" ("Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: The Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form," *ELH* 50 [1983]: 432). Subversive religious egalitarianism, which might have been used politically to oppose aristocratic privilege, was supposedly defused in the literary pastoral world by poets whose very participation in the courtly genre of the pastoral eclogue associated them with the aristocracy.

In his analysis of the September eclogue, Lane offers a different description of the function of the pastoral in poetry. He sees Diggon Davie's reports

of his travels as registering real complaints about "the changing structure of agrarian relations" (1). Davie's descriptions of "missing chimneys and livestock converted into cash—evoke issues that arose from the transformation of the countryside by the commercialization of agriculture" (1–2). More importantly and in direct opposition to Montrose, Lane says the September eclogue "incorporates the voices of those we do not expect to find in poetry—the people," the nonelite of Elizabethan society. Their presence here disturbs any simple identification between serious poetry and a courtly elite or an aristocratic perspective" (2). This concept of the pastoral is not particular to the September eclogue; it extends to the *Calender* in general. Spenser's shepherds are not the literary manifestation of leisured gentlemen, but the voice of the rustic poor, registering complaints about Elizabethan institutions.

In response to Montrose's argument, in "'Eliza, Queene of shepherdes,' and the Pastoral of Power" (*ELR* 10 [1980]: 163), that the pastoral served the interests of the hierarchical social order, Lane suggests that "Spenser was opposing himself (if only prophetically) to the mainstream of Elizabethan pastoral" and "the *Calender* stands as a dramatic exception to this claim" (83). It is stimulating to see the *Calender* as an exception, to see Spenser making his literary debut as a radical critic of the established order, and Lane makes it possible to do just that. Lane says that his "work emphasizes social and political institutions and practices because their elucidation is necessary for an understanding of the *Calender*, but those dynamics were registered and mediated—whether wholly consciously or not—by a writer we know as Edmund Spenser. None of that social experience, or the cultural resources he brought to bear on it in this poem, originated with him, but he perceived it, worked to understand it, and responded to it, crafting its articulation in order to communicate it—to represent it—in a particular way, all with a view toward reshaping the society of which those dynamics were constituent elements" (7). He thus provides a way to accommodate cultural-materialist claims for human agency to new-historicist claims that discursive fields create and contain that agency.

Wayne State University

Tim Montbriand

The Snowflake on the Belfry: Dogma and Disquietude in the Critical Arena by Anna Balakian. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Pp. xiv + 270. \$39.95.

This important collection of 19 essays includes a series of lectures that Balakian gave during a 3-week appointment as Visiting Fellow at the Institute for the Humanities of Indiana University. The subject of these essays is Balakian's judicious commentary and captivating thoughts on the relatively recent developments in the field of literary criticism, developments that include deconstruction, post-structuralism, multiculturalism, and other literary approaches that have insisted on adhering to political agendas and radical ideologies. What Balakian strives to do in these discussions is not so much to debate the validity of the politics or the ideological soundness of the meth-

ods in question, but for the most part simply to examine systematically the effects that these radical methods have had on the classroom teaching and study of literature.

There is probably no one better qualified than Anna Balakian to take up the heated debate that is now raging in academic departments of literature, most particularly in departments of comparative literature, where the new methodologies have been embraced with the greatest enthusiasm. Balakian is famous for her extensive and ground-breaking studies on surrealism and symbolism, and she can boast of having rubbed elbows with some of the great artistic and literary legends of our time. Her book, *Literary Origins of Surrealism*, first published in 1947, includes a frontispiece that is an original drawing by Yves Tanguy, which he created for her book at the end of his life while residing in Connecticut. Balakian personally interviewed André Breton in his Greenwich Village apartment in New York City during his self-imposed exile of World War II. Her long career as a scholar and professor of comparative literature has given her a unique perspective on the vicissitudes and the cataclysmic changes that have been wrought in the past few decades in the area of literary criticism. In short, she is one of few scholars who have the credentials and the experience, not to mention the courage, to take on a debate that for many is just too fraught with political contentiousness. She has entered into the literary fracas as a calm, level-headed, and shrewd observer, from whom we have much to learn.

In these essays, as Balakian questions the veracity of Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, and others, she persuasively argues that the faddish popularity of these ideologues has now established a stranglehold on academic departments of literature that has done little to enhance the canon or the curriculum, and perhaps has done much to cause damage. In her introductory essay, "By Way of Entry into the Fray: The Critics and Their Authors," Balakian chronicles the first stirrings of her alarm in April 1970, while attending a colloquium on the new novel in Strasbourg, France. There she heard a structuralist, whose name she does not give, but to whom she refers as "the man in the dark glasses," declare that there was no such thing as an author, that there was only writing, and that the literary work has written itself using the author only as a medium. Thus, the reception of a literary text by the reader gained paramount importance, and the aesthetic value of the text as carefully crafted by the author was of almost no importance. To Balakian's horror, no one contested the arguments of the structuralist at the colloquium, who was allowed to voice his comments after every paper, and there seemed to be palpable a general air of defeat among many of the participants. In this short but powerful introductory essay, Balakian establishes her deep reservations, and for the rest of the book she effectively refutes "the man in the dark glasses."

The question of aesthetics is examined again in more depth in the essay, "The Snowflake on the Belfry: The Aesthetic Dimension in Literary Criticism." Balakian chastises the critics of the new methodologies for flagrantly ignoring the aesthetic dimension of the literary text. The belief in the exaggerated importance of the reader in the reception of the text, which strips the text of its personal past and forces it to be regarded as a product of a collective unconscious, is one to be viewed with suspicion. Not only is the author

disowned, but the author's personal style has ceased to be a factor in the aesthetic value of the literary work. After unloading the aesthetic baggage, the semiologist can presumably view the text in its raw linguistic state, conducting a scientific investigation of its common denominators, which approaches, as Balakian notes, "the type of knowledge one can glean from myth, archetypes, or paradigms" (15). Divested of its aesthetic value, Balakian wonders if the literary text is not being treated in much the same way as a social document that merely presents information. She also comments that the attempt to nullify the unique history of the literary text, as well as that of the author, results in nothing less than an attempt "to undermine Western culture by deleting the validity of its referential role in literature" (19).

In the essay entitled "Multiculturalism: The Case of Surrealism," Balakian describes a form of multiculturalism that is different from the one presently being touted in academia. Using surrealism as her example, she discusses the history of an international literary movement that included both familiar and unfamiliar literatures, and that strove to stress what was common to all the national literatures rather than what was different. This successful struggle to universalize a literary movement was based on international communism and spread to nearly every part of the globe. Balakian points out the multiplicity of nationalities among some noted surrealists: the Czech Vítěslav Nezval, the Yugoslav Marco Ristić, the Swede Max Walter Svanberg, and the Japanese Takiguchi, among others, including the many surrealists of Latin America, where the movement had its most electrifying effect. She notes how the fraternal and unifying forces of the surrealist brand of multiculturalism were much different from the divisive forces of the current brand, where one sees "abject chauvinism, with each subculture fighting for its day in the sun" (131).

In her last three essays, "Quality Control in the Teaching of Literature," "Canon Harassment," and "Literary Theory and Comparative Literature," Balakian sums up her concerns about the sometimes paralyzing effects of the new methods and ideologies on the classroom teaching of literature and the classroom curriculum. She reiterates her concern about aesthetics; she questions the wisdom of using the tools of the anthropologist and the sociologist for the analysis of literary texts; she is disturbed by the contrived manipulation of the traditional canon; and she voices her uneasiness about the unclear definition of "influence," fearing that influence studies may be replaced by studies of intertextuality, and studies of literary fortune may be replaced by reader reception theories.

There is undoubtedly much here to argue about, to debate, to consider and reconsider. But it is important that this alternate viewpoint become more widely disseminated, that the voice of doubt be heard in literature departments across the continent. It is probably safe to say that this book is mandatory reading for anyone who has ever taught literature in the college classroom and for anyone who has ever seriously studied it.

Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History by Michael André Bernstein. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994, Pp. xiii + 181. \$22.00.

Michael André Bernstein proposes a theory of reading that celebrates ". . . the radical freedom of human beings from any kind of determinism" (1). This "radical freedom" is achieved by substituting the practice of "sideshadowing" for "foreshadowing" as a method of reading texts and the world-as-text. Sideshadowing is ". . . a gesturing to the side, to a present dense with multiple, and mutually exclusive, possibilities for what is to come. . . . Sideshadowing stresses the significance of random, haphazard, and unassimilable contingencies, and instead of the power of the system to uncover an otherwise unfathomable truth, it expresses the ever-changing nature of that truth and the absence of any predictive certainties in human affairs" (1, 4).

The theory is a combination of soft deconstructionism in literature and watered down Emersonism as applied to life. Truth is not non-existent, only relentlessly fluid, and life, if not a bowl of cherries, is at least a cornucopia of infinite possibilities. In an essay published seventy years before Bernstein's book, T. E. Hulme discussed the romantic and classical views of human beings by saying that, "To the one party man's nature is like a well, to the other like a bucket. The view which regards man as a well, a reservoir full of possibilities, I call the romantic; the one which regards him as a very finite and fixed creature, I call the classical." Bernstein's theory clearly places him among those who advocate the romantic view.

Bernstein's decision to use the Holocaust as a test case for his theory of a radical freedom achieved by viewing the world through sideshadowing lenses constitutes another instance of the recent tendency by deconstructionists in academia to co-opt the Holocaust. Bernstein is not unaware of potential difficulties: "To have chosen to confront the claims of sideshadowing with the enormity of the Shoah," he writes, "is to test it against a seemingly intractable counter-instance, on the principle that if the validity of sideshadowing can be discerned here, where it seems so difficult to recognize, then its pertinence in cases that are not as morally and theoretically arduous will be more readily apparent" (13-14).

Awareness of potential difficulties, however, does not enable Bernstein to recognize his own offense in the clause, "to confront the claims of sideshadowing with the enormity of the Shoah," his academic vanity preventing him from recognizing the parodic grotesquerie of setting the scientific academic coinage "sideshadowing" alongside what was once an emotive phrase but has now become an academic cliché, "enormity of the Shoah." Bernstein's trivialization is all the more ironic in that he later observes that ". . . it is all too easy to think of representations of the Shoah whose lapses into tastelessness and exploitation are deeply offensive, and which, in their vulgarity, risk coarsening the collective memory" (52). The beam in one's own eye is indeed difficult to detect.

Bernstein's claim to be conducting an experiment in which he tests the "claims of sideshadowing" against "the enormity of the Shoah" is doubly disingenuous. First, the claim is disingenuous because we know all along that Bernstein is not testing anything at all. We know the "seemingly intract-

able counter-instance" will have to yield to "the claims of sideshadowing," because all Bernstein has to do to make the one yield to the other is manipulate words in the requisite way. Secondly, the claim is disingenuous because Bernstein is actually using "sideshadowing" and the Holocaust to promote the underlying political agenda of discrediting Zionism as a totalizing ideology by establishing the claim that "Zionism" has perverted the Holocaust to its own narrow nationalist needs. Since so many Israelis are Holocaust survivors and children of survivors, the symbiosis between Israel and the Holocaust is extremely complex and emotionally wrenching. I cannot possibly deal with such complexities in the space allotted here, but the point is that Bernstein does not deal with them in his book either. He presents a ridiculously simplistic scenario in which "Zionist ideology" exploits the victimhood of the victims for one set of purposes and the heroism of the Jewish resistance fighters for another set of purposes. Though the question of the relationship of the Israeli present to the Holocaust past has been the subject of innumerable discussions in the Israeli press and Israeli journals, Bernstein develops his two-pronged Zionist/Holocaust agenda on the basis of only a few second hand academic articles, and never deals with a single original source.

It would be impossible to unpack all of the complex issues that Bernstein has presented in simplistic terms, but I would like to address myself to two specific issues he raises. The first issue is the representation of Jewish resistance movements under Nazi occupation, and may be called a problematics of reality and imagination. The second is the fictional representation of the Holocaust by a survivor, and may be called a problematics of literature and history.

In highly oversimplified terms, Bernstein presents the image of a Zionist ideology that sought to foster the myth of the fighting Jew in the Israeli imagination by narratizing and commemorating Jewish resistance movements during the Holocaust as clearly motivated heroic acts. "Thus," he writes "the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or of the Sobibor and Birkenau revolts, have become crucial in the post-war Jewish, and more particularly, in the Israeli imagination, as proof of a new Jewish readiness to strike back against their oppressors." In a scholarly book dealing with a topic as widely discussed as the place of Jewish resistance movements in the Israeli imagination, we would expect the author to supply supporting evidence, and to discuss psychological, sociological, and historical studies, as well as journals, diaries, and literary accounts, such as novels, poems, and stories about Jewish uprisings that reflect this allegedly crucial influence on the Israeli imagination. But in support of his all-encompassing claim, Bernstein cites only one gossipy comment from a secondary essay.

Bernstein next undertakes to undermine the Zionist myth of heroic Jewish resistance by deconstructing the actual uprisings. "Like the plot of a classical tragedy," he writes,

the uprisings against the Nazis took place in a restricted space and time, and the fighters seem tragically heroic to us because we know how they perished and thus we can grasp the beginning and end of each uprising as a single event, fixed in a clear progression of linked

episodes. But while it was actually happening, it was experienced instant by instant and person by person, each with different motives and inspirations for fighting, and each with differently formulated explanations of his own involvement.

Since Bernstein attributes so much importance to narrative strategies, one would have expected him to specify which narratives he feels have misrepresented Jewish uprisings in tragic-heroic terms. But having suggested that Jewish Resistance narratives misrepresent what actually happened, he does not cite a single mythologizing narrative, nor a single first-hand narrative, nor a single account by a historian of Jewish resistance movements (such as Shmuel Krakowski, Nechama Tec, Aaron Nirensztein).

In fact, the uprisings were not as unmotivated as Bernstein claims. Historically, there were often several (but far from infinite) motivating factors hotly debated among and within resistance groups: namely, whether their primary goal should be to save as many Jews as possible, to avenge the wanton murder of Jews by killing Germans, or to save Jewish honor by fighting in a battle the fighters knew they had no hope of winning, just to show that all Jews did not go "like sheep to the slaughter." A historian of the Krakow Ghetto Resistance, Aaron Nirensztein, cites testimony that there was a split between two factions in the Akiva Resistance Movement in the Krakow Ghetto. One faction held that ". . . we must use our resources to rescue as many of our people as possible," while a second maintained that ". . . our resources are so meager and trivial, that what we have to do above all else is to save Jewish honor, to fight for the sake of fighting, and to die as heroes."¹ Another historian of Jewish resistance movements, Shmuel Krakowski, writes of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising that "It was understood that this would be a special kind of revolt. . . . It was necessary to prepare for an uprising that was doomed to defeat from its onset. . . ."²

As to Bernstein's contention that "while it was actually happening, it was experienced instant by instant and person by person, each with different motives and inspirations for fighting, and each with differently formulated explanations of his own involvement," to the extent that no two individuals are perfectly identical, the deconstructionist description may be accurate. But the implication that the fighters were unmotivated particles floating in space is existentially and historically false, and is sharply contradicted by Gusta Davidson Draenger, a resistance fighter in the Krakow Ghetto, in her *Pamiętnik Justyny (Justyna's Diary)*, written in 1943, while the struggle was still taking place.³ Gusta reproduces a Sabbath-evening speech by one of the leaders of the Resistance, Adolph Liebeskind, in which he tells the young people assembled around him (most in their teens): "We're on a one-way journey with no return. The road we've chosen to travel is the road to death. Remember that. Anybody who joined us in the hope of improving his chances of survival should know that's not what we're about." Liebeskind's idealistic fatalism is a far cry from Bernstein's armchair theorizing! For the Jewish resistance fighters in the Krakow Ghetto, the sideshadowed "present dense with multiple, and mutually exclusive, possibilities for what is to come" would have been a grotesque joke. The point is, that Bernstein's contention that the Jewish Resistance movements have been mythified is worth-

less because he takes no pains whatever to establish a "historical reality" that would undermine the alleged myth.

But what may be most disturbing in Bernstein's formulation is that in "atomizing" the Resistance fighters to promote his political agenda, he not only deconstructs their identities as individuals, but also removes the possibility of making any moral distinctions. Consider a re-narratizing of Bernstein's story line that would re-arrange some of the nouns to read as follows:

Like the plot of a classical tragedy, the "*aktzias*" against the Jews took place in a restricted space and time, and the SS troopers seem diabolically evil to us because we know how they murdered their victims and thus we can grasp the beginning and end of each *aktzia* as a single event, fixed in a clear progression of linked episodes. But while it was actually happening, it was experienced instant by instant and person by person, each with different motives and inspirations for murdering victims, and each with differently formulated explanations of his own involvement.

The narrative atomization of the human form that Bernstein engages in to deconstruct the "Zionist mythology" of the Jewish resistance fighters, and to remove any sense of tragedy from their plight, equally removes all moral responsibility from the SS men who were committing mass murder for the sake of insuring racial purity. If the Jewish resistance fighters were merely unmotivated particles engaged in a random series of contingent acts, then so were the murderers. All behavior, then, is contingent, non-motivated, and immune to moral assessment. Non-determined (unforeshadowed) Jew particles and non-determined SS particles happened to float into the same space and the Jew particles disappeared.

Having disregarded historical texts and all first-hand accounts in his theorizing about the Holocaust as history, Bernstein introduces "history" into two chapters he spends misreading the fiction of Aharon Appelfeld. Appelfeld's novel *Badenheim 1939* portrays a group of assimilated middle-class Austro-German Jews existing aimlessly in a resort town, apparently as the final stage of the German genocide against the Jews is about to commence. The characters are in a state of deep denial of the realities surrounding them, and they either refuse to, or cannot, acknowledge the ominous signals of disaster that constantly bombard their senses. As has often been pointed out, the novel is Kafkaesque, surrealistic, poetic, allegorical, but Bernstein is morally outraged both by the historical inaccuracy of the novel and by what he takes to be Appelfeld's unfair hit on Austro-German Jews.

"The behavior of the vacationers in Badenheim," Bernstein writes, "is not just self-deceiving; it is also largely Appelfeld's own fantasy, belied by the pervasive terror that gripped Austrian Jewry within hours of the *Anschluss*" (66). Bernstein's assertion is so absurd it refutes itself. What does he think "the behavior" of the characters in any work of fiction is if not the "fantasy" of the writer, whether that "fantasy" is presented as "realism" or allegory? How can events "believe" a text which does not claim to be a chronicle of events in the first place? But at any rate, as we shall see, he is not even correct in his characterization of the affective center of the novel.

Bernstein's inability to apprehend the affective center of the novel leads him to accuse Appelfeld of blaming Austro-German Jews for their own destruction, an accusation that exposes not only Bernstein's ineptitude as a reader but his simplistic understanding of the Holocaust. The gist of Bernstein's argument is that the reader, who realizes these decadent assimilated Jews are about to be enveloped by the Nazi genocide while they do not, is led by the narrator (Appelfeld himself?) to pass the most severe judgment on the Jewish characters in the novel, and therefore on actual Austro-German Jews. "By never mentioning the Nazis directly, but by representing the Jews of *Badenheim* as irredeemably selfish and petty," Bernstein concludes, Appelfeld "... commits the ... offense of leaving unchallenged the monstrous proposition that Europe's Jews are somehow 'deserving' of punishment" (66).

It is difficult to pinpoint "this monstrous proposition," which Bernstein attributes to the fact that Appelfeld writes in the vein of foreshadowing rather than sideshadowing, anywhere in the novel. Certainly, it is not a proposition ever stated in the novel, or by Appelfeld himself outside the novel. And even if it were accurate to suggest that the Nazis don't play a significant role in the novel because they are never "mentioned directly," I believe a reasonable reader uncommitted to a narrow theory of "sideshadowing" would not infer from the novel the moral that "Europe's Jews" deserved to be exterminated. Even supposing a completely naive reader unable to distinguish between "Europe's Jews" and *Badenheim's* Jews, what scale of justice would that reader have to use to arrive at the conclusion that average human beings guilty of nothing worse than lack of foresight and inability to act decisively "are deserving" of being exterminated like vermin?

Bernstein has arrived at this bizarre conclusion by taking over the observation of earlier commentators that the reader does not see any Nazis portrayed directly, and then extending that observation to mean that since we read only about Jews in the novel, they must be to blame for their own destruction. Hence, he concludes that "... it is difficult not to include the author of *Badenheim 1939* ... among those 'prominent Jews' ... [alluded to by Appelfeld in an interview with Philip Roth] who make 'harsh comments' about the victims of the Shoah. Even the most assimilated and self-denying Jews were still sufficiently Jewish to be murdered, and so the contempt of a novel like *Badenheim 1939* is just as 'anti-Semitic' in its attribution of complicity as are the harshest judgments of the unnamed 'prominent Jews'" (72).

But the "contempt" for the Jewish characters in *Badenheim 1939* resides in Bernstein's own heart, not in Appelfeld's novel. And the charge that the Jews were complicitous in their own destruction is Bernstein's, not Appelfeld's. Bernstein can find contempt in the novel only because he knows very little about Holocaust literature, and because he does not have a clue to understanding survivor sensibility. In an essay entitled, "A Plea for the Dead," in *Legends of Our Time*, Elie Wiesel has written, "I plead for the dead, and I do not say they are innocent; that is neither my intention nor aim. I say simply we have no right to judge them; to confer innocence upon them is already to judge them. I saw them die and if I feel the need to speak of guilt, it is always of my own that I speak. I saw them go away and I remained behind.

Often I do not forgive myself for that." It is exactly this survivor sensibility that motivates Appelfeld, a sensibility Bernstein does not comprehend.

Badenheim 1939, then, is far from being an "anti-Semitic" novel. The Jewish characters portrayed by Appelfeld are pathetic, and perhaps tragic, but certainly not contemptible to any reader who understands the novel. The narrator makes clear that these characters do not belong to the top echelon of assimilated Austro-German Jews (the Warburgs, for example); they are, rather, people in comfortable circumstances, but not the wealthiest and most powerful German Jews. The spa at Badenheim is clearly a second-rate place that does not attract the elite, even in the assimilated Jewish population. This much is apparent in Appelfeld's portrayal of the impresario, Dr. Pappenheim, and in the fact that the entertainment at Badenheim is second rate because top performers won't come there. The pervasive tone of the novel is not contempt but terror, the terror of people trapped like animals sensing they are being led to the slaughter, but not knowing what they can do to avert the catastrophe they feel is coming. If Bernstein had been able to get beyond his theory he would have seen that Appelfeld portrays with great artistry what Bernstein himself has described as "the pervasive terror that gripped Austrian Jewry within hours of the *Anschluss*." Their consciousness of being trapped, and the ensuing terror, begins to influence the behavior of the vacationing Jews, as should be apparent to any sensitive reader. They are not angels to begin with, only humans. That is exactly Appelfeld's point. But they don't deserve to be exterminated just for being human, and they descend into a deeper aimlessness and decadence as they begin to sniff their own powerlessness and impending annihilation.

Appelfeld's not mentioning Nazis directly is testimony to his brilliance as a novelist, not the moral blemish that Bernstein contends. If it is true that Nazis are not mentioned, it is also true that Germans and German bureaucracy are a pervasive presence in the novel. For some unknown, and therefore ominous, reason, all Jews are required to register with the Sanitation Department. A shadowy Sanitation Department inspector is ubiquitous in the novel, and his presence, while mild, nevertheless strikes fear into the hearts of the Jews. All the inhabitants, vacationers, and performers in Badenheim are stained with some kind of physical or neurotic illness, and we are led to infer that the sickness and decadence are somehow related to a European, and perhaps specifically German, high culture that provides no deterrent to the coming destruction. Appelfeld has captured to perfection the chilling contrast between the serene relentlessness of the bureaucratic killing process and the paralyzing terror of the victims.

A fly leaf following the title page of *Foregone Conclusions* identifies the volume as "A Centennial Book," one of a hundred to be "published between 1990 and 1995 . . . as an example for the Press's finest publishing and book-making traditions." While this is indeed a beautifully made book with a very handsome dust cover, it is, ironically, a book so puerile in its theorizing, so shoddy in its scholarship, so inept as literary commentary, so blatantly insensitive in its handling of moral and ethical questions, and so misleading in its oversimplification of complex issues, that it reflects shame not only on its author, but on the Press and on the editors of the series in which it is a vol-

ume, "Contraversions: Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society."

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Notes

1. A Nirensztein, "Jewish Resistance in Krakow Under the Nazi Occupation" (Yiddish), *Bleter far Geshikhte*, Warsaw, Nos. 1-2. (1952): 235.
2. Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942-1944*, trans. Orah Blaustein, (New York & London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1984), 163.
3. Gusta Davidson-Draenger, *Pamientnik Justyny* (Krakow: Krakow Jewish Historical Society, 1946).