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Milton and the Revolutionary Reader by Sharon Achinstein. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Pp. xv + 272. \$35.00.

We Have Fish'd and Caught a Frog. In introducing her chapter on *Paradise Lost* with a quotation from that pamphlet of 1649, Sharon Achinstein will perhaps stir at least subliminal echoes of more recent controversies. Despite the brilliance of Stanley Fish's *Surprised By Sin*, reader-response criticism has not seemed to fulfill its original promise. Fish's readers are effectively timeless, gradually yielding to the superior insight of the master-narrator; and, Achinstein points out, they "perform their acts solo." *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* breaks new ground in giving us a Milton who is at once a participant in and an agent of the revolutionary changes of the mid-seventeenth century, and who aims at both reaching and producing readers who are likewise engaged—"fit" audience in a very active sense.

Milton himself occupies only part of the book's attention; the book appears in a welcome new series on "Literature in History" and Achinstein offers a general analysis of disruptions and innovations in the reading process in the revolutionary decades of the 1640s and 1650s. These amounted, Achinstein argues, to an early stage of what Habermas has termed a political public sphere. She has trawled deeply in the huge ocean of the Thomason Tracts and come up with much material that will be new even to specialists on the period. Rather than offering a chronological account, the chapters follow the spiralling movement of ever more complex hermeneutic responses as traditional practices of reading were disrupted and conservatives tried to contain those challenges. In his trial in 1649 Lilburne "created a role for his audience to play" in appealing over the heads of his judges first to the jury and then, through printed pamphlets, to the nation. This kind of challenge to long-established authority generated the reaction which Achinstein charts in her second chapter, where John Cleveland and Thomas Hobbes serve as contrasting examples of royalist responses to the Babel of new ideas. The third chapter examines the widening sphere of debate in pamphlets and political practice. The Putney Debates of 1647, in which some rank-and-file soldiers debated the principles of government with their superiors, offer a particularly striking example of debate in practice, where urgent political imperatives meant that the more relaxed humanist model of arguing *in utramque partem* had to be modified. Yet the debate form might in fact be coercive, funnelling a spectrum of views into narrowly opposed partisan moulds: political exchange became propaganda. Parliamentarians were, however, more open to public debate than royalists, who had an inherited dislike of diffusing mysteries of state too far down the social hierarchy, and thus presented the conflicts in terms of personalities rather than abstract ideas. The fourth chapter examines how writers and politicians, accepting that opposing ideas could not be kept out of circulation, sought to arm readers by lengthy engagement with opponents' arguments.

Milton's writings are viewed against this complex series of contexts. Even though his immediate concerns may have shifted a great deal in the 1640s and 50s, "Milton was surprisingly committed to a single goal, that of making his public fit to achieve self-governance through training in virtue." *Areopagitica* fits very well into her argument as a tract which makes the act of read-

ing into a heroic struggle, a paean to the emergent public sphere. *Eikonoklastes* engages in a process of hermeneutical correction which, as Achinstein shows in an interesting section, is developed in the visual imagery of *Paradise Lost*. Milton's epic is difficult to historicize, partly because it once seems to offer topical anchorings and then disconcertingly unmoors itself from them. Achinstein offers one such example, a neglected genre of "Parliament of Hell" satires in which Parliamentary leaders are presented in terms similar to Milton's Satan and fallen angels. This analogy is for Achinstein part of a "repeated strategy of provoking allegorical interpretations while refusing to supply an unequivocal 'key' to the allegory," and thus educating fit readers. Similarly, the image of the sun both presents and subverts the kinds of easy link between natural and cosmic orders that were being made by post-Restoration royalists.

Achinstein thus offers us a Milton who, far from standing aloof from the common herd, was passionately committed to involving them into his own struggles. She offers a new and thought-provoking angle on the connections between poetry and revolutionary politics. Whether commenting on Milton or on little-known pamphlets, she writes with wit and energy. There are great strengths in her method of concentrating on the process of reading rather than merely classifying the different political alignments. There may, however, be attendant problems. She does not depart as far as might initially be expected from Fish's somewhat abstract model of reading: we are dealing in the main with ideal types, and, while Lilburne and Milton figure in this book, we are not given Lilburne's comments on the *First Defence*. Some of the alignments produced by this focus on the hermeneutics of reading look rather odd: for example, members of the Hartlib circle are linked with royalists in their fear of the Babel of political revolution, yet a linguistic politics that from today's perspective may appear conservative did not necessarily entail a conservative stance on questions of religion and politics. Achinstein is much concerned with the concept of propaganda, and distinguishes its one-sidedness from the more open search for truth that for her characterizes truly revolutionary reading. Yet it may be that one problem in understanding Milton's historical position has been the desire to mark off his lofty idealism from the vulgar polemics of more engaged figures. William Empson was being characteristically perverse when he tried to show that Milton had foisted a forged prayer into *Eikon Basilike* in order to discredit the king, yet he was recalling his own delight in the possibilities of black propaganda when working with the B.B.C. in wartime. Empson's awareness of the constraints, and also the challenges, of writing for a definite cause is an important aspect of the period that is in danger of getting lost when the dominant hermeneutic ideal is one of open-mindedness.

Historians of reading have to account for the fact that the lofty Milton was a close friend of the arch-propagandist and turncoat Marchamont Nedham. In *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* Nedham and other representatives of the emergent periodical press remain somewhat shadowy figures, and it must be said that Achinstein's handling of journalism reflects the deeply undeveloped state of research on that topic, with a number of minor inaccuracies. Milton's links with Nedham reinforce Achinstein's refreshing challenge to conventional ideas of Milton's elitism. On the other hand, there may still

be problems in Milton's particular relationship with the public sphere that mark him off from many of the pamphleteers Achinstein discusses. She writes that Milton stages the argument in *Areopagitica* "as if he were pleading before the Athenian Areopagus, a public place where ordinary men's voices would be welcome"; but the Areopagus was an aristocratic counterweight to the democratic Assembly, and Isocrates, Milton's generic model here, praised it because it might contain popular unruliness. Just what that allusion is doing in the pamphlet remains a matter of much debate, and it need not invalidate Achinstein's general analysis: as she says, Milton is concerned with an ideal audience of the political future, and such an audience could take on board both democratic openness and a sense of the need for social discipline. All the same, the welcome that Milton afforded to the public sphere had well-defined limits. Charting and understanding those limits is an important further task; but Achinstein has made a major contribution both to setting Milton in history and to opening up histories that moved beyond Milton's own frames of reference.

Magdalen College, Oxford

David Norbrook

In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women, by Julie A. Carlson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. xiii + 267. \$49.95.

Poetic drama has long been considered the problem child of the Romantic canon. Critics have so often dismissed, ridiculed, explained away and (more cruelly still?) apologized for the genre that it can feel disorienting to come upon Goethe's unstinting admiration for *Manfred*, or Coleridge's for *The Borderers*, or Shelley's for *Cain*—tempting one to still one's cognitive dissonance by convicting the whole set of mutual flattery. Revisionist attempts to rescue at least some examples of Romantic drama from a tradition of malign neglect have been most successful when cutting the "natural" link between drama and theater and reconceptualizing the genre as "mental theater" (Byron's term) rather than "closet drama," experiments in generic hybridity (*Manfred* is subtitled a "dramatic poem," *Prometheus Unbound* a "lyrical drama") rather than stage plays manqués. Inevitably, the revisionist line has recently come in for revision itself, by critics more interested in issues of theatricality and performativity and in the relation of both to historical and social change in an era that witnessed the theatricalization of politics and the politicization of theater. Julie Carlson's *In the Theatre of Romanticism* is the most substantial and authoritative of these newer studies; it usefully alters the terms for criticism of Romantic drama and makes the genre seem not only worth sustained attention (what isn't these days?) but exciting, even trendy—no apologies here. Even more impressive, Carlson has made the study of Romantic drama seem vital precisely *because*, not in spite of, its reputation as "bad theatre" (2).

Carlson renders theater central rather than marginal to Romantic-Era British culture in several overlapping ways. Drawing on the work of cultural historians of the French Revolution, Carlson argues that political and theatri-

cal forms of representation come to inform one another and manifest a shared problematic on both sides of the channel during the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Theater, as public spectacle, also becomes a crucial site for the formation and display of a new British national ethos to counter the no less spectacularized threat of a newly consolidated French Nation. The Romantic poet's theater, with its all too well-known disproportion of thought to action, of metaphysics to stage business, becomes a forum for publicly working out the relation of introspection to performance, of theory to execution, in a period of violence and accelerated change. Finally, gender comes (literally) into play in Carlson's study as action and the performing body become female-identified, lyricism and the philosophic mind become coded as male. Romantic anti-theatricalism is reinterpreted as an ideologically overdetermined locus of social conflict rather than a pragmatic response to inadequate stage conditions, with anti-revolutionary, anti-Napoleonic, and misogynistic valences, not to mention a touch of class anxiety.

Carlson resituates Romantic drama not only through her turn—or as Carlson herself, over-enamored of the coy parenthesis, might put it, (re)turn—to theater, but also by giving Coleridge, usually upstaged by Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, the best part of her attention. She argues compellingly that far from representing a turn away from politics, Coleridge's theory of imagination is deeply invested in questions of nationalism, that the formation of "nation" and "imagination" are "mutually constitutive processes" (33). Shakespeare, "England's master mind" (17), is deployed by Coleridge not only as a model for nation-building through theatrical representation and as national icon in himself, but also as exemplar, particularly in *Hamlet*, of the anatomy of mind in an age of revolutionary upheaval and intensified commercial activity, teaching England to reflect before it acts, "making theatre a reform school for the public mind" (5). In this account, Germany becomes a necessary detour en route to the intersection of England, Shakespeare, and a reformed and reforming drama, as Schiller anticipates the "turn to theatre to redress [Revolutionary] social upheaval" in his *Wallenstein* plays, two of which Coleridge translated in 1800. Schiller demonstrates how the esthetic mode, in its very detachment, can annul former principles of action "so that one can envision, and then effect, new alternatives" (76), though *Wallenstein* also evinces the dilemma involved in moving from introspection to action such that by acting, "humans alienate themselves from their ideal selves" (77). Coleridge's plays variously thematize, stage, and seek to evade this moment of self-alienation and problematize notions of action, illusion, and representation in the process.

Carlson's readings of Coleridge's verse dramas are convincing and make a signal contribution to Coleridge studies, impelling one to find new interest in these relatively neglected works (and making *Zapolya* seem interesting is a neat trick all by itself). Coleridge's dramatic career is divided into three phases: a youthful one, represented by *The Fall of Robespierre* and *Osorio*, in which vengeance plays a legitimate function, though an rather vexed one in the latter work; a middle phase, represented by *Remorse* (the revised *Osorio*), in which physical violence is rejected, remorse (in the service of self-reformation) displaces revenge, and yet action remains attractive for its man-

ifestation of male "potency" (105); and a final (post-Napoleonic) phase, represented by *Zapolya*, in which a nation's legitimate rulers are restored without vengeance and action is nearly entirely given over by contemplative men in favor of active women. This last phase both culminates and curtails Coleridge's adventure with the stage, as the spectacle of female agency embodied in the theater (with the concomitant feminization of the introspective male hero) engenders an antitheatrical reflex in the male poet that is repeated in contemporary male criticism of Shakespeare productions and again in criticism of Romantic drama that would decouple theater and text.

How well does Carlson's refocalizing of Romantic drama through Coleridge, nationalism, and gender serve as a basis for rethinking the genre (if genre it can be called) as a whole? Insofar as the "problematics of action in a revolutionary age" (99) which Carlson delineates to such effect in Coleridge can be seen in works like Byron's *Marino Faliero* and *Sardanapalus* or in Shelley's *Cenci* (and implicitly in Wordsworth's *Borderers*, though Carlson doesn't spell this out), the approach succeeds quite well and lends a new sense of continuity to this group of texts. But the emphasis on theatricality also draws attention away from several works that have long been considered the most successful examples of a markedly uneven genre. A study of Romantic verse drama that shows more interest in *Marino Faliero* than in *Cain*, that finds room for *Otho the Great* but not for *Manfred*, that requires an extended discussion of *Zapolya* but cannot accommodate *Prometheus Unbound*, finally seems as skewed as earlier studies which proved unable to do justice to *Remorse* and *Sardanapalus*. What seems needed now are studies that can follow Carlson's lead in recovering the significance of the theater and of theatricality for Romantic-era poets attempting to renew the drama, while keeping sight of their interest not simply in juxtaposing lyric and dramatic modes but in complicating or even collapsing the generic border between them, sometimes leaving the stage behind (though not without significant traces) in the process. If Carlson's lead should not be followed blindly, however, *In the Theatre of Romanticism* remains, for now, the best guide we have to understanding the significance of dramatic poetry in the romantic era.

Boston College

Alan Richardson

Wordsworthian Errancies: The Poetics of Cultural Dismemberment by David Collings. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. Pp. xii + 287. \$39.95.

If one requirement of canonical longevity is the author's capacity to speak to the critical concerns of whatever age in which his or her texts may reside, David Collings's *Wordsworthian Errancies* gives clear signs that Wordsworth will be with us well into the next millennium. Drawing on a wide range of contemporary cultural and literary theory, as well as current (and not so current) Wordsworth critics, David Collings shows how many of Wordsworth's most discussed texts anticipate many of today's critical trends, in particular Lacanian psychoanalysis, cultural deconstruction, and, most provocatively,

queer studies. Although occasionally marred by weak argument, Collings's book is a brave and largely successful attempt to bring Wordsworth's text into dialogue with the critical avant-garde.

Squaring off against those who would contain Wordsworth's poetry through historicist critique, Collings offers up a post-modern Wordsworth, arguing that the poet "is far more outrageous than readers have generally recognized, that he not only champions deviance and a nearly overt homoeroticism but links them intimately with his status as a poet" (13). Focussing on Wordsworth's literal and figurative wanderings, Collings shows how the poet's concern with cultural dislocation (or dismemberment) gradually develops into the primary source of his poetic power. This perverse empowerment occurs in several discernable stages, each dramatized in particular poetic works: In the *Salisbury Plain* poems Wordsworth moves from conventional anti-war protest poetry, to a gothic-oriented preoccupation with cultural dislocation itself. While intimating the "illegitimacy of the symbolic order" (59) in *The Borderers*, Wordsworth also criticizes those who, like its central character, "would choose for cultural dismemberment" (66). Cultural critique turns inward in "Incipient Madness," *The Ruined Cottage*, and "The Thorn," poems in which the "vacillation of the subject" (77) becomes a source of masochistic pleasure. Such pleasure, and the feeling of control associated with it, is more directly courted in "The Discharged soldier," "The Cumberland Beggar," and the later drafts of *The Ruined Cottage*, while, in Part One of the 1799 *Prelude*, "cultural disaster" and the poet's "masochistic vocation" (118) are conjoined in the pleasurable pain characteristic of the spots of time. In *Michael*, Wordsworth's developing sense of the problematics of "culture" thwarts his best attempts to pass that culture on, and, in an especially insightful analysis of *The Prelude's* "Arab dream" and "the crossing of the alps" episodes, we find Wordsworth recognizing the apocalyptic power of deviancy, something which, through the inadequacy of language, he calls "imagination" (199). Appropriately, Collings rounds out his discussion of Wordsworth's errancy with a discussion of *The Prelude's* French Revolution chapters, whose medley of genres demonstrates the poet's sense that history is ultimately unreadable. Indeed, as Wordsworth's celebration of Robespierre's beheading suggests, "history" achieves its primary meaning not through objective representation, but through primitive forms of ritual, in particular the versions of human sacrifice which, as Collings points out, haunt Wordsworth's work.

As many readers will perceive, Collings's walk through Wordsworth's wild side is, in itself, not radically new. Peckham's "dark romanticism" has found treatment before—especially in Bloom and Hartman, the latter perhaps vying with de Man as Collings's primary influence. Nevertheless, Collings does manage to enmesh these themes in the Lacanian fractured self, the post-structural always already collapsing linguistic or cultural order, as well as the masochistic strand of queer studies. These theories allow Collings to make surprising connections between the poems he treats. To be sure, a few of Collings more hyperbolic interpretations—especially his fresh take on *The Prelude's* rowboat episode (137)—would be enough to make Matthew Arnold blush, if not send into cardiac arrest. Moreover, for all his comments on Wordsworth's rhetoric, Collings, like many de Man-inspired critics, seems to

know little of the eighteenth-century rhetorical theory which informs Wordsworth's concepts of language, self, and culture.

This having been said, there is a great deal in Collings's book which, while often not completely persuasive, does, like any good pioneering work, point to territory which future critics will settle more securely. Not only is Wordsworth's canonical stature assured, but what is more exciting, so is our continuing sense of the poet's unfathomable strangeness.

Hofstra University

Scott Harshbarger

Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780–1832 by Alan Richardson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. xviii + 327. \$54.95

The Cambridge *Studies in Romanticism* series includes both reconsiderations of major Romantic writers and provocative accounts of the importance of less familiar, certainly less taught figures, including Helen Maria Williams and William Cobbett. Alan Richardson's book is a welcome mixture of both trajectories: a thorough, well-researched investigation of the education debates of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, offering extensive commentary on "popular" didactic literature by figures such as Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism* also describes the (canonical) Romantic response to and representation of childhood, reading, education, and "ideology" ("ideology," as Richardson reminds us, is a term that emerged from post-Revolutionary debates about education). The idea is to *situate* a specifically "Romantic" literary production within the context of a more general cultural revolution; Richardson is less interested, however, in travelling the well-trodden ground of political and industrial transformation than in carefully describing educational institutions—he regards "literature" as an educational institution—crucially involved in developing a "consensual" model of subject-formation. As he points out, "we tend now to think of literacy in terms of democratization or even 'empowerment'" (65), but Richardson demonstrates how educational reforms and print culture designed to universalize literacy also worked to subordinate not only children, but also women, the working classes, and colonial subjects.

The chronological dimensions of Richardson's project are, he declares, determined less by an uncritical adoption of traditional literary-historical versions of the Romantic "era" than by his sense of a "revolution in schooling": by 1832, universal literacy was an avowed aim of liberal thinkers and consensual rather than "repressive" models of learning had come to dominate, models which meant that fantasy and imaginative literature in general had a greater role to play in subject-formation. This framing enables Richardson to equate Romanticism with "the emergence of 'Literature' as such, a cultural institution predicated on a canonical set of 'imaginative' works, disseminated through schools and centralized publishing venues, and managed by a professional group of critics and interpreters" (31). Thus the relation between literature and education is "not simply a matter of setting a literary fore-

ground against a social-historical background," since literature "play[s] a material role in education" (33). In Richardson's account, the debate about what role, if any, imaginative literature or fantasy should play in children's education is absolutely central to understanding both the ideological dimensions of education reform and the formal dimensions of Romantic literature.

If readers familiar with Althusser recognize in educational institutions and consensual models of subject-formation merely the "ideological" technologies of power, Richardson's thorough investigation of the historical field means to complicate broad theoretical claims by calling attention to the proliferation of ideas of education and kinds of literature; as he points out, "reproduction theories cannot by themselves explain the *development* over time of such systems" (27). Nor are the ideological effects of a given system of education or literary text always clear. In the first two chapters of Richardson's book, which survey, respectively, ideas of childhood and the related education reforms of the late eighteenth century, we learn that the historical decline of grammar schools and instruction in classical languages is related to the rise of the "consensual" ideology of education. As he points out in reviewing the influential educational theories of Locke and Rousseau, rote learning was inimical to a consensual model of subject-formation: how could the child "agree" to the authority of a text if she or he could not understand it? Rationalist reformers therefore aimed, and were ably assisted in this aim by children's book publishers, to follow Locke's dictum that children be taught to reason "always in very few and plain words" (56). If Rousseau was more extreme in his rejection of books themselves as instruments of childhood education (even *Robinson Crusoe* was recommended only as a series of "object" lessons), the idea was the same: children, he argued in *Emile*, should be surrounded with objects of sense, which do not require "belief." Modulating Rousseau's position, the Edgeworths in *Practical Education* insist on an instruction that at least pairs words to definite things or concepts, therefore rejecting both fairy tales and poetry as reading materials for children, opposing "the common practice of having children memorize or recite poetry" (57), since the child's vocabulary would thereby outstrip his or her sense of the word's *meaning*.

Thus although "writers in the rationalist tradition and their Romantic critics are joined," Richardson writes, in their opposition to technologies of memorization (60), the consensual model, in positing an equation between learning information and *understanding*, is crucially at odds with Romantic education by the sublime. To illustrate "Romantic" criticism of the "systems" proposed by reformers like Edgeworth and Lancaster, Richardson quotes Southey's *The Doctor*: "Oh! What blockheads are those wise persons who think it necessary that a child should understand everything it reads" (5). Unsurprisingly, Romantic poets defended the importance of fantasy against the "efficiency" models of the rationalist educators, but Richardson points out the double valence of this defense. On the one hand, when Wordsworth and Coleridge "propose that the child be left by itself to confront gaps and limitations in its habitual thinking process" (57), they defend resistance to a remorselessly programmatic and normativized learning process; on the other hand, their tendency to represent the folk or fairy tale as an extension of "na-

tural" education is a "subtly conservative" (123), almost Burkean reaction to the radical agenda of some educational reformers.

Richardson wants to suggest that Romantic literature potentially occupies "an ideologically neutral 'open ground' between the radical pamphlet and the reactionary tract" (123)—also between the didactic lesson and the fairy tale or chapbook—because it utilizes the very "gaps" between language and meaning that lead rationalist educators and children's literature writers to censor riddles, puns, and satire. But he has some difficulty in *locating* the irony that would distinguish the Romantic text and subvert the goal of informing a stable subject. For example, Blake's "The Little Black Boy" supposedly critiques the discourse of colonialism, using a "scene of maternal instruction" (165) to reverse the black boy's relation to the English child, "placing him in the role of instructor" (164). But this role reversal, as Richardson's subsequent consideration of the "Madras" system of student-tutors makes clear, can also be read as an internalization of authority rather than its subversion.

While the rationalist premises of educational reform were often criticized by the Romantics, Richardson underscores their more ambivalent relation to the larger understanding of education as an institution of for the reproduction of social and cultural power. For example, the same Wordsworth who criticized educational reformers as "skilful usurers of time" and "wardens of our faculties" would later be, like Coleridge, an ardent supporter of the so-called "Madras" system of education, developed in India by Andrew Bell for the subaltern population. Richardson's analysis of the Madras system is fascinating, without question the most valuable part of the book. Romantic writers compare Bell's reform (and the parallel system developed by the Quaker, Joseph Lancaster) to (a) the steam-engine (Coleridge) and (b) the printing press (Southey and Wordsworth). These analogies are quite telling, insofar as they suggest that the subject-formation envisioned by the new pedagogy was allied both to the goal of industrial "progress" and to the conditions of print culture; Coleridge's despised "reading Public" was indeed a Public produced by the systematization of reading and writing.

Indeed, on almost every count, Richardson's overview of the context of the Romantic production of "literature" seems authoritative, well-researched and plausible. In Chapter III, surveying the children's literature produced in the period, he describes the publishing industry's response not only to the reform of education but also to its *domestication*; parental oversight of children's education demanded the proliferation of materials for home consumption. In Chapter IV, considering that other internal "subaltern" population, women, in relation to education reform, Richardson finds an interesting way to discuss not the women writers for the adult market who have been the mainspring of so much recent feminist work, but instead the so-called "Mrs. Teachwells" (Maria Edgeworth, Anna Barbauld, Eliza Fenwick) who reduced the fairy tale to a didactic instrument. In discovering an underlying association "of maternal with pedagogical power" (167), Richardson might have profited from knowledge of Friedrich Kittler's brilliant chapter on late eighteenth-century German theories of teaching literacy, called "The Mother's Mouth," in *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, but his narrow focus does have the advantage of providing numerous rewarding

anecdotes; we learn that both Mary Shelley and Elizabeth Villiers, a fictional character in Charles Lamb's *Mrs. Leicester's School*, are taught to read by their fathers by tracing the letters on their mothers' gravestones (78, 134). In the last chapter, on educational institutions and literature developed for the working classes, Richardson again manages to forge a series of convincing parallels: the child who will be "informed" by proper educational methods and materials serves a model for the worker who will assimilate habits of frugality and industry from adult equivalents of "Little Goody Two-Shoes" found in Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy*; moreover, as Richardson points out, Martineau "favors colonial settings" (228), thereby reinforcing the equation between the domestic and the colonial subaltern.

What distinguishes *Literature, Education, and Romanticism* is the astute and persuasive case it makes for the relevance of education debates about what and how children should read to discussions of the subject-formation and assimilation of colonized populations, women, and the working class. If this is an attempt to "race, class, and gender" the Romantic child, it is certainly not a programmatic one; at every turn, Richardson attempts to nuance our sense of an "ideologically diverse" (111) literary production by providing us with a richly detailed context that establishes a conflicted rather than unitary model against which to measure Romantic representation. However, when Richardson attempts to cash in on his painstaking historical analysis, the results are sometimes disappointing. He discusses very few *unexpected* texts, and, with the exception of *The Prelude*, not a single long poem at any length. Nor does his extensive knowledge always prevent erroneous assertions. For example, his "reading of the archive" (10) enables him usefully to refine Lawrence Stone's four conventions for representing childhood; he describes the "transcendental" child of Romantic poetry as well as a "maternal" convention, "marked by a unique attentiveness to the infant's body, the dangers involved in birthing it . . . and the bond between child and mother" (12). Implicitly, Richardson opposes these latter two conventions; explicitly, he finds the maternal convention "only among women writers of the era" (11). Such a claim necessarily overlooks evidence to the contrary in Wordsworth's "The Mad Mother" and "The Forsaken Indian Woman," to say nothing of accounts of (failed) surrogate nurturing by fathers in "Michael" and "Vaudracour and Julia." This would be a minor objection were it not for the fact that Richardson uses the absence of this "maternal convention" partly to characterize Romantic representation, described as "oddly disembodied" (15). But a parallel for Baillie's slobbering "varlet" can be found in Blake's "Infant Sorrow," as Barbauld's baby made "invisible" by the womb calls attention to Wordsworth's conflation of maternity and supernature in "The Thorn."

Sometimes Richardson merely overstates his case, as with reading *Frankenstein* as a "critique of female education" (204); while Richardson's contention that Walton's haphazard reading "allies him with most women of the period" is persuasive, especially given what we know of Mary Shelley, describing the novel as representing "the dilemma of the middle-class adolescent girl, caught between equally unhappy alternatives" of haphazard education and a repressive disciplinary regime (205) is too obviously thesis-driven. At other times, especially with *Lyrical Ballads*, he seems unaware of

relevant secondary work: there are no citations of Frances Ferguson, for example, though she has written on Anna Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* in relation to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and her "dialectical" reading of "We Are Seven" would have complicated Richardson's presentation of the poem as a simple conflict between education by nature and by culture. And, while Richardson's synthetic procedure of discussing "popular" literature with the same intelligence and energy he devotes to its canonized relative is admirable and productive, it sometimes occasions missteps. A plot summary of Fenwick's *Juvenile Library* or (especially) Edgeworth's "The Birth-day Present" is both needful and valuable; a plot summary of *Mansfield Park* is considerably less so. Almost always, Richardson proves sharper on the less familiar texts. Nonetheless, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism* provides, as its author had hoped, a valuable way of looking at "some of the channels through which Wordsworth's poetry passed on its way to becoming canonical" (263).

University of California, Berkeley

Celeste Langan

Intersections: Nineteenth-Century Philosophy and Contemporary Theory edited by Tilottama Rajan and David L. Clark. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. Pp. vii + 386. \$21.95.

This collection of fourteen essays by different writers begins with an introduction by the editors stating that the book's purposes include "recovering the philosophical idealism that contemporary theory rejects, but that is nevertheless dialogically present within it" (6). The book concludes with Stanley Corngold's contention (in his essay "On Death and the Contingency of Criticism: Schopenhauer and de Man") that "it is urgent now to reacquire ourselves, with due intensity, with the human subject" (375).

The purposes and the quality of writing in the volume's fourteen essays are diverse in the extreme. In this review, I will briefly indicate the contents of three of these essays (by Christopher Norris, Rajan, and Andrew Bowie) which I regard as especially valuable contributions to the field, but I will mention at the outset that other contributors to the volume are John Sallis (who writes on Hegel and mimesis), David L. Clark (on Schelling's *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*), Judith Butler (on bodily subjection in Hegel's *Phenomenology*), Ned Lukacher (comparing Nietzsche and Freud on conscience and the will to power), Thomas Pfau (on moral agency and critical discourse), Arkady Plotnitsky (on a general theoretical framework associated with Hegel, quantum mechanics, and the theory of the unconscious), Eric Meyer (on postmodernity and romantic historicism), Paul Hamilton (on Sade and Stendhal as they anticipate more recent thinking about ideology), Jean-Pierre Mileur (affirming that M. H. Abrams, Harold Bloom, and British poets are practical whereas *The Literary Absolute* by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, like the German romantic writing which that book treats, is theoretical), Mark Cheetham (comparing Derrida and Kant on "the sublime"), and Stanley Corngold (whose manifesto for "the human subject" ends with the slogan, "Just say 'No' to contingency" [375]).

Norris's "Kierkegaard, de Man, and the Ethics of Reading" suggests that

Kierkegaard's pseudonymous and aesthetic writings covertly serve religion and edification, "ensnaring the reader in fictions and speculative arguments that would ultimately self-deconstruct" (39). "Kierkegaard carries deconstruction only to the point where its strategies supposedly come up against an undeconstructible bedrock of authenticated truth" (41). However, citing de Man's argument about narrative performativity in Rousseau's writing, Norris observes that Kierkegaard's work and its ethical intent are liable to "further deconstructive reading" (57).

Rajan's essay, "Language, Music, and the Body: Nietzsche and Deconstruction," asks, "in what ways is Nietzsche different from de Man's representation of him?" (147-48). Rajan suggests that Julia Kristeva offers a very different version of Nietzsche's importance: Kristeva "draws from the later Nietzsche a concern with the body as the material site of the unconscious" (153); Nietzsche's earlier works (via Kristeva) give "poetic language a centrality it does not have" in later works (153-54). Referring to music and the body, Nietzsche "valoriz[es] *différance* over *logos*" and "gives it a materiality it lacks in a critical practice that posits nothing outside the text" (155). Rajan explains "the semiotic" in terms of Kristeva's difference from Lacan: "because of its association with the mother's body, the semiotic is also linked with a return to something more inward than the world of symbols constructed by the law of the father" (162). Kristeva's account "endows this deconstruction with an experiential rather than a purely linguistic dimension (163). And a "valorization of the aesthetic marks Kristeva's deconstruction as a form of romanticism" (165).

Bowie's "'Non-Identity': The German Romantics, Schelling, and Adorno" is probably the only essay in the collection that all professional philosophers (however analytical) would recognize as thoroughly philosophical in its purposes and methods. Bowie argues that Adorno's conception of "non-identity" is "simply wrong in one vital respect" (244). In German idealism after Kant, the dualism of world-in-itself and our knowledge was supposedly overcome by methods that "end up repressing the object side of the dialectic." But "it is not possible to overcome the split of thinking and being from one side of the divide between the two." Both Schelling and Friedrich Schlegel "saw the consequences of this fact" as Hegel and Adorno did not (246). "Both Schelling and Adorno are convinced that Hegel too readily assimilates everything into thought" (253); but in *Negative Dialectics* "Adorno has really just inverted Hegel, by now attributing the prior role of the subject in Hegel to the object" (255). Bowie concludes that "if the idea of non-identity is to be appropriately understood . . . it should not lead, as so much recent theory has, and some of Adorno's philosophical writings do, to the repression of subjectivity via the reduction of the subject to the happening of language or society" (259).

From a scholarly point of view, one notices that (with rare and brief exceptions) the only historical context constructed in *Intersections* involves the comparison of one writer's abstract statements with another's. During decades of political revolution, Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, Schlegel, and others among the German writers here treated were involved in some important worldly conflicts, and their writings participate in these conflicts in ways that the book's essays do not indicate. Schelling's *Philosophical Inquiries into*

the Nature of Human Freedom (to mention only one example) takes in senses of the word "freedom" which are not as metaphysical as the reflections about the abyss of groundless unbeing which Clark offers in his essay on that treatise. In 1809, there was an obviously political dimension to Schelling's statement that "what had initially been unruly had been brought to order" (I quote James Gutmann's translation, 34), but that fact could hardly be guessed from a reading of *Intersections*.

The essays in *Intersections* refer often to de Man: for example, Norris's use of de Man's work is astute in framing his perceptive critique of Kierkegaard's writings; but Rajan explicitly prefers Kristeva over de Man, and Corngold's defensive manifesto for "the human subject" represents de Man as a threat (because of de Man's insistence on contingency). An odd omission from the scholarly apparatus is the work of Gilles Deleuze, who is mentioned in a couple of lists of names, but whose work isn't cited at all: even apart from his *Difference and Repetition*, and aside from *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (both written collaboratively with Felix Guattari), Deleuze's books include full-length commentaries on Kant and Nietzsche which also have independent philosophical importance.

In terms of the quality of philosophical descriptions, the variety among the essays is remarkable. Cheetham's understanding of Kant's negative account of "noumena" in connection with the "sublime" is commendable; and one need not share Bowie's view of Adorno and Hegel to admire the precision and clarity of his formulations. But whereas Bowie can quite correctly state the negatively critical content of Kant's work with regard to putative "knowledge of things in themselves" (246), Clark's statement about "Kant's separation of real and phenomenal worlds" involves a serious philosophical mistake (91). Kant distinguishes phenomena (which are as real as we can get) from noumena, which, Kant says, are merely illusions of the human faculty of reason which is all the while occupied only with itself.

I will mention only one other example of the quality of philosophical thinking represented in the other essays in *Intersections*: when Pfau writes that Hegel "redefine[s] morality as social and discursive practice rather than as an inward presence ('conviction')" (230), it is not clear whether Pfau means to say simply that Hegel refers to such a description of morality, or whether Pfau means to say that Hegel affirms that (as a matter of fact) morality is a social practice rather than an inner conviction, or whether Pfau means to assert his own agreement with Hegel in either case. Does Pfau mean to assert that it was Hegel's inner conviction that morality is not a matter of inner conviction? Clearly Hegel could articulate a description of a particular *concept* of morality (or anything else) without believing or asserting that morality itself is identical with the description; the features of a description do not necessarily belong to the thing described. In fact, it is Hegel's customary way of proceeding to consider ways of conceiving things, rather than things. Perhaps Pfau means to assert that there is no such thing as morality external to assertions about it; or perhaps he means to affirm that Hegel said such a thing. But it is not clear from Pfau's essay what is being said here.

When I think as an editor, I notice that some of the essays (by Norris, Rajan, Hamilton, Bowie) are impressively well written and edited, and some

others are not. One of the essays (Clark's) is 68 pages long (about 100 pages in typescript), consisting of sentences whose obscurity would have prompted some editors to ask for stylistic work as well as abridgement. Other essays include uncorrected problems in subject-verb agreement, dating of sources, grammatical structure of sentences, and spelling; but my own experience as a coeditor of scholarly collections has taught me that recent changes in the procedures of scholarly publication have confused the division of labor in ways that have not always been good for the quality of editing.

In their writing and in the quality of their arguments, however, the best of the essays in this collection are outstanding. In my view, the relationships between nineteenth-century philosophy and contemporary theory are as important as the editors and contributors indicate, and the book's contributions include both salutary emphasis on that general set of issues and some exemplary specific treatments.

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Healing the Republic: The Language of Health and the Culture of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century America by Joan Burbick. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. x + 355. \$59.95.

More than thirty books are published each year which consider conceptualizations of the human body. Many of these publications focus on bodily representations as articulated synchronically in languages of related disciplines. Burbick's study precisely fits this recent and burgeoning intellectual activity. Her main thesis centers on how the discourse of medical, legal, political, and literary writings reveals cultural assumptions and anxieties as inscribed in the common flesh of the body in nineteenth-century America, especially as interpreted by its middle-class spokespersons and authorities.

In fact, the rivalry among newly developing authorities is one of this book's most interesting points. As Benjamin Rush's epoch of bloodletting and cold-water cures (not to mention his suggested treatment for necrophobia: temporary burial in a coffin) was passing away, struggles for control of the body's health raged fiercely, ranging from the phrenologists and mesmerists to the newly established American Medical Association (1847). Faced with the collapse of local communities as bases of knowledge and advice, many writers were suspicious of rising professionalism. Samuel Thomson's *Narrative of the Life and Medical Discoveries* (which saw thirteen editions after its first printing in 1822) complained that the vacuum of traditional authority had created a gullible public ripe for the plucking by predatory physicians.

Equally intriguing is how some reformers, while opposing the hegemony of doctors, became as dictatorial as Hawthorne's Puritans. For Sylvester Graham, to cite one example, physiology took on the status of sacred law "which cannot be violated with impunity," he said, adding that no one can "move nor breathe nor exercise volition without obeying or violating penal laws." Mary Grove Nichols, a Graham sympathizer, wrote lectures, a novel, textbook chapters, and reminiscences which argued for the authority of sci-

ence, rationality, and law predicated upon experts who would certify whether such authority was being properly received.

In contrast, reformers like John C. Gunn (who wrote the most popular medical care book in mid-nineteenth century America), Lydia Maria Child, and Harriot Hunt promoted a democratic relationship between subject and ruler. Gunn and Child converted garden herbs and kitchen contents into domestic "tools" to be used in medical treatments and instruments. Hunt believed patients were capable of (and required to) "speak their disease." In a symbiotic relationship, Hunt's patient and physician would develop a community of sympathy wherein "the little word WE" would help to effect recovery. First and foremost, the patient must learn "to utter yourself in confidence and trust" after searching for a language which enables such utterance. One can easily see how this medical opinion relates to literary and historical matters including Dimmesdale's need to confess to his community, Gilman's nervous monologue in "The Yellow Wallpaper," and William Seward's wife who, by acceding to her doctor's authority, allowed herself to be led to death.

These are some of the main issues in *Healing the Republic's* first section whose purpose is to clarify general issues. Among other issues in this section is the insistence that the body signified the nation. As Burbick puts it: "In the language of health, if the individual could sustain well-being, sense disease, reflect, read, listen to good advice, and act properly, then a free society could be upheld and, when necessary, healed." In doing so, it was necessary to dissect and to disjoint various bodily parts. As Burbick explains: "In order to construct social order and maintain hegemony, a topology of the body emerged during this period that privileged particular parts of the body. The brain, heart, nervous system, and eye became keys to health and natural symbols that empowered particular groups to create systems of discipline, self-control, and understanding for the individual. Each body part resonated with a social philosophy and promoted forms of authority necessary for a healthy nation."

Section Two of Burbick's book attends to the values encoded in each of these four body parts. The first and last chapters—the managing brain and the technological eye—are the strongest parts of the entire book, and some readers will be familiar with the former since a version of it was previously printed in *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies*. In this Section, Burbick asserts that Ahab conformed to a medical superintendent's warning that the imbalance of the brain and the excessive ambition of "exceptional men" resulted in social disorder, and *Moby-Dick's* definition of monomania echoed the definition found in the *Penny Cyclopaedia* popular in Melville's day. The unstable grammar and punctuation of Dickinson's verse was a "nervous" language which challenged cerebral knowledge. The stomach, nervous or otherwise, was often claimed as a "natural symbol" of the warring elements in cultural distress. The eye was assisted by numerous inventions—the zootrope, the phenakistiscope, the thaumatrope, the magic lantern, the daguerreotype—which transformed ordinary phenomena into the spectacular and which, by dissociating scene from its viewer, promised objective truth. Of particular interest is Burbick's account of the use of slides in mental asylums to relieve boredom, to control patients' conduct, and to

provide "evidence" to inmates of an independent, exterior world outside their own subjectivity and delusion.

Anecdotal information is, in fact, this book's most attractive feature. Indeed, the information in the lengthy footnotes is often as useful, relevant, and as interesting as the material in the text. Some readers might find the least attractive feature to be the book's frequent but wispy allusions to current theorists like Geertz, Bakhtin, Gramsci, and Foucault; since these allusions are seldom developed, they distract from the anecdotal review. Still other readers may have problems with Burbick's consideration of the nineteenth century in its entirety since the century is marked by vast literary and cultural shifts and developments. The status of physician changed drastically from the founding of the AMA in 1847 to 1905 when the medical profession had gained all but complete mastery over the field, and literary emphases on Romanticism's possibilities yielded to the Naturalist's obsession with law and restriction.

One final characteristic of this book is its tendency to raise fascinating questions which are summarily disposed of, leaving it to readers to construct more complete and complex responses. For example, Burbick mentions in passing that slaves were considered to have bodies different from Anglo-American bodies, and one would like to have fuller discussion of this fascinating idea, including whether conceptions of slave bodies changed when they gained freedom or if gender were a factor. Since Burbick performs excellent and thorough analysis of middle-class white women's role in "Healing the Republic," one wishes her to match that achievement in the book's other parts. This desire is felt most frequently whenever sex or economics are involved; fine ideas surface which all too quickly sink out of sight. One wishes those ideas were either placed off the main path in footnotes or developed. That is, one wishes the book were either longer or shorter than its 350 pages.

Still, Burbick proffers a wealth of material interlaced smoothly across many textual disciplines. Perhaps her best contribution, aside from the anecdotal, is her faithful attention to the anxieties and tensions recorded in the discourse on health in nineteenth-century America. One of the skillful passages wherein Burbick articulates this tension reads: ". . . the autonomous, universal body did not unify the nation, but gave its citizens a grid upon which they wrote their fears about the republic. The brain, heart, nervous system, and eye as sites of the body created a rhetoric of health that struggled to establish order while revealing fundamental value conflicts. Body sites valorized particular forms of labor, created hierarchies of race, class, and gender, and offered solutions dependent upon kinship, conversion, proper moral sensibility, and even genetic make-up." To a considerable degree, Burbick fulfills this ambitious thesis.

Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression by Lynda Hart. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Pp. 201. \$35.00, cloth; \$14.95, paper.

Incriminations: Guilty Women/Telling Stories by Karen S. McPherson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Pp. 215. \$29.95.

In a recent issue of *The Nation* (February 20, 1995) devoted to the growth of "The American Gulag: A Prison-Industrial Complex," Teresa Albor contributed an essay, "No Family Values Here: The Women Get Chains . . ." which focuses on the state's incarceration of women without regard to the fact that many are primary caretakers for small children. As part of her investigation she offers the following statistics: "More women are now sent to prison than at any other time in the nation's history—the result, largely, of mandatory sentencing minimums and other strict federal sentencing guidelines. . . . between 1983 and 1992 the number of incarcerated women tripled. That's twice the rate of growth of the male prison population. . . . They are predominantly poor minority women who have been inadequately educated and badly served in terms of health care. . . . Most women are in prison for non-violent or drug-related offenses. About 32 percent are in for drug sales or possession. Some 29 percent have committed crimes against property (larceny, theft, extortion, bribery or fraud). . . . women in prison for violent crimes are more than twice as likely as men to have victimized a relative or intimate. . . . Those few women imprisoned for murder are likely to have killed people who they say abused them." Even as women are perceived as narrowing the gender gap in terms of numbers in prison, the motivation for committing crimes and the kinds of crimes committed suggest that criminality remains highly inflected by gender, as well as race.

Two recent contributions to feminist scholarship consider the guilty woman, guilty either of aggressive behavior and/or of incriminating herself, as a way of shifting the blame away from the victim (of violence) to the figuration of culpability in a system where subordination in and of itself incites suspicion and garners blame. Lynda Hart in *Fatal Women* begins with a cultural imaginary that finds women incapable of aggression. When women achieve visibility as aggressive, they do so only by means of the appearance/disappearance of the lesbian who lurks, in the shadow, as secret. The impossibility of women's aggression is thus displaced onto the sexual aggressiveness of the female invert. The lesbian, by actively desiring, becomes inherently criminalistic. The lesbian and the female offender share the effect of inversion: born women they become men, since active desire and aggression remain the prerogatives of masculinity. But becoming a man is only one way for woman to enter history as a criminal, although it is the one that Hart highlights. The other way is for two women to commit a crime together, the result of being too close. In this case it is not becoming a man but doing without men altogether that incites criminal behavior. Hart reminds us that Lacan based his theory of the mirror stage on Christine and Lea Papin, two sisters who as maids killed their female employer and her daughter in France in 1933. *Délire à deux*, he called it.

According to Karen McPherson's work, *Incriminations*, women have been

framed, made to embody both interdiction and transgression. They can only plead guilty, like seventeenth-century witchducking, whereby women floated if guilty and drowned if innocent. Incrimination is not proof of guilt but it connects one to the "field of crime." To engage in storytelling may be inherently self-incriminating. But is it the women or the stories who are telling and on whom? Are the women guilty of telling stories or of telling their own stories? Or is someone telling on them? Narration, transgression and gender are found to be inscribed as intertext in the novels of twentieth century women writers. By locating the policing—of women and of meaning—one then is able to identify the prohibition and the violation, and thereby ascertain the imputed crime.

As contributions to feminist scholarship in the field of cultural representation both of these books not only shift the focus from victim to criminal but also from "images of women" as object of analysis to processes of signification whereby female subjectivity is the subject of an ongoing suspicion. Hart is not looking for the lesbian behind the criminal, but for the lesbian's appearance and disappearance in the making visible of woman's aggression. McPherson is not interested in the scene of the crime but in the arrival of the police in as much as it can tell us something about what is being policed. They are interested in the intersection of language and law only in as much as it inscribes women as impossibility and puts them in an impossible situation. For Hart lesbianism begs the question: what does it mean to prohibit something that doesn't exist? Desire between women can't exist if sexuality can only be imagined as phallic; thus to criminalize lesbianism would mean to bring it into existence as discursive and thus sexual possibility. For McPherson women's writing begins with the question: what does it mean for the story to be about not being able to tell the story? Women's voices have been associated with nagging and gossip, with fatal seductions, with exceeding the narrations told to and for women. Telling a story becomes an act of transgression because the very act of speaking incriminates the teller engaged in breaking the silence.

To not be interested in the image of woman as either victim or criminal, but rather in the appearance of lesbianism or in the voices of women, means also not to privilege the genre of crime—the mystery or thriller—as the site of criminality in fictional discourse. Only one of the novels McPherson focuses on involves an historically documented crime, Anne's Hébert's *Kamouraska*, based on the murder of a man by his wife and her lover in Quebec in 1839. In the other texts she discusses, Simone de Beauvoir's *L'Invitée*, Marguerite Duras's *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, criminality takes various forms, ranging from gender as a pretext for blaming to the resistance of a heterosexual imperative. In de Beauvoir, in the absence of the inscription of police, the analysis begins with the proliferation of a crime-related vocabulary in order to read the murder as a way of wiping out the real crime, that of betrayal. In Duras the criminal is inscribed in textual strategies that create sound metonymies between the words *cri*, *crise* and *crime* so that the "ravishing" takes the form of a violent act of displacement. In Hébert the *passé simple* narratologically buries the crime that insinuates itself on the present where the price of survival is guilt. In Woolf the

policing is done by medical men who assign the guilty role to the madman as both non-normative and scapegoat.

The readings McPherson offers are extraordinarily detailed and extremely elegant. They assume that one has read these novels, preferably yesterday. They inscribe the author in ingenious ways: by writing this novel de Beauvoir has killed Olga (as opposed to Sartre) on paper, but by dedicating it to her fails to leave a body. They offer insightful observations into the relation between language and power: in Hébert the language of the law is English while the language of the crime is French. But the intense attention to words on the page draws attention to the arbitrariness of the choice of texts: *L'Invitée* has no police; *Mrs. Dalloway* has no crime. Woolf's text comes last rather than first and is the only one written in English.

If history and cultural context don't matter, what about gender? The book begins with a slight embarrassment about focussing on "women's voices" as oppositional strategy since as post-Derridean readers we recognize this trope as belonging on the heap of "dead metaphors." It ends with the 1989 Montreal massacre where a single gunman shoots fourteen students at the Ecole Polytechnique whom he has singled out as feminists. As well-trained readers we can identify "dead metaphors." As feminists we want to speak out against and on behalf of dead women. But will an unexamined investment in *explication de texte* help us do that or will it just remind us that no matter how well we read, we could still be shot for it, we might still be found dead, we can never not be guilty of speaking?

Hart dedicates her book and devotes the last chapter to Eileen Wornos, the first so-called female serial killer, who waits on death row for having confessed to killing seven white middle-aged men as a hitch-hiking prostitute. She pleads self-defense, seeing nothing wrong with killing those who would have killed her, and shows no remorse, even as she wishes it hadn't happened. The confession of her crime was for the sake of her lover, another woman, and her redemption has taken the form of formal adoption by a newly born Christian, again a woman. To make sense of this historical event in terms of the criminal woman as both problem and solution to a male homosocial economy, Hart returns to the Victorian villainess in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*; the first homosexual woman on stage who appears in Wedekind's *Lulu* plays; the repression of the lesbian in female buddy films, primarily *Thelma and Louise*; the aggression of Karen Finley's performance art that makes it possible for her to join the censored "NEA Four" as the only heterosexual; *Single White Female* as the fear on the part of white men of their own non-reproduction by either African-American women or lesbians; and *Basic Instinct* where the relationship between two women makes it impossible to know which one committed the crime.

In this case the selection of texts seems less arbitrary because their reason for being there has to do with a retelling of the master narrative, the Lacanian psychoanalytic one. The book begins by historicizing the invert of sexology, the female offender of criminology and the narcissist of psychoanalysis by showing how they all inform each other at the turn of the 20th century. Even as the law seeks to uncover the criminal's secret, which he himself knows, and the psychoanalyst seeks to discover the hysteric's secret, which is kept even from herself, in the end, Hart admits to agreeing with

Lacan that Woman does not exist, except as man's symptom. If man's desire is for desire, Woman as symptom is "the non-existent obstacle that functions as the cause of man's desire" (133). Eileen Wuornos, then, refuses to function as man's symptom and instead becomes his scapegoat. But does this tell us anymore about the appearance of the first female serial killer or, are we being taught one more time how to read Lacan, this time with a little Žižek added? Hart does make me think further about the representation of lesbianism as both impossible and prohibited; as both autoeroticism and a desire that exceeds visual representation; as mutual masturbation and the pleasure women have no reason to renounce; as both so invisible that it poses no threat and so threatening that it becomes apocalyptic. Even as Hart makes clear from the beginning that her focus is on the lesbian as white, a chapter on race argues that this is so because the addition of racial difference would produce an alterity more terrifying than pleasurable for the white heterosexual male imaginary. But did she learn all this from Lacan or from these Hollywood films? If a cultural studies approach expands the repertoire of texts, then why limit their potential meanings to those offered by a single model of reading? Woman does not exist can offer a useful theoretical construct for countering liberal feminism's assumption of ontological sameness, but what is the connection between that non-existence and a woman on death row? If the book is dedicated to "all the women who have been vilified, pathologized, and murdered for defending themselves by whatever means necessary," what defense is there against the epistemic violence of Lacanian psychoanalysis? Woman does not exist, just as the phallus can never be had. But isn't the confusion between phallus and penis one way to represent male sexual violence? In which case the confusion between The Woman and women would be another way to understand why women can be made not to matter.

Do I really want or need to know this much about these four novels? Do I really want to have Lacan explained to me one more time? Reading each of these books reminds me of what it is I am capable of understanding, but not what it is that I want to know, or what it is that I should know to make sense of this particular moment in history. I want to know what it means that national focus has shifted from woman as victim to woman as criminal. I want to know why it is happening now. I want to know what it feels like to know (in the sense of Raymond Williams' "structures of feeling") that victims of violent crimes are women who haven't been able to defend themselves and that for women to defend themselves is still perceived as inherently transgressive. What does this mean for academic feminism, twenty-five years after women appropriated transgression as a means of liberation? Either we notice the man with the gun before he shoots us (unlike Nicole Simpson), or we point the gun at him, like Eileen Wuornos. Or, as writers, we are left putting on the body of (the dead) Judith Shakespeare. Which is what Woolf suggested, almost seventy years ago. Only this time homicide has come to replace suicide.

Which is what these books set out to do when they insist on "writing beyond the ending" in the form of an "afterword" (Hart) and a "post(modern)script" (McPherson). Is it any coincidence that both of them end by discussing the texts of lesbian writers, Deb Margolin's *Lesbians Who Kill* and

Nicole Brossard's *Le désert mauve*? Psychoanalytic theory reminds us that Oedipus both desired and committed a crime, that (incestuous) desire was not his only crime. But in as much as the lesbian is both impossible (within psychoanalysis) and prohibited (by the law), maybe only she can speak from the dead, and thus for the dead, at this particular moment, in history and in the production of feminist knowledge. Meanwhile, other women, many with children, mostly women of color, continue, in increasing numbers, to sit out sentences in prison.

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Subjective Agency: A Theory of First-Person Expressivity and its Social Implications by Charles Altieri. Blackwell, Pp. ix + 306. \$54.95.

Vamps and Tramps: New Essays by Camille Paglia. New York: Vintage, 1994. Pp. xxv + 532. \$15.00.

In his new book, Charles Altieri attempts to provide a theoretical account of how people express and manage their identities, arrive at decisions, form judgments, understand others, and in general make their way around. He depicts himself as an outsider to philosophy, although three out of four Library of Congress headings under which the book is filed include the word "Philosophy"; and says that he is chiefly concerned to map a middle ground between the "ascetic vigilance" of philosophical rigor, and the cultivation of aesthetic "fascination." Neither traditional philosophy nor poetry, Altieri contends, can do justice to the intricacy or value of human action; but between the two lies a huge logical space in which an account of human agency in all its dimensions from the psychological to the political, an account both rigorous and responsive, might be able to flourish. *Subjective Agency*, Altieri claims, is that account.

Unfolding over seven dense and challenging chapters, the argument is constructed as a realization of certain tendencies of what Altieri identifies as the "expressivist tradition," whose primary representatives are said to be Spinoza, Hegel, and Wittgenstein. Among the contributions of this tradition, Altieri claims, is a refusal to embrace the dominant "Romantic" assumption about the subject, that some definite but inchoate inner self struggles to achieve expression in the form of articulate judgments, utterances, and actions. Altieri wants to redescribe the subject by eliminating all talk of inwardness and concentrating on agency alone, which, he says, "performs itself" as subjects will their identities by "enacting certain investments" or by "shaping substance in contexts that recur" (87, 87, 110). "Will," he says in this vein, "is not a matter of inner life," but is "simply the aligning of conative energies with the world, so that they seem continuous with it and effective within it" (50).

It really is simple, for everything lies on the perceptible surface, and is largely manifest as "style," a term that carries the burden of individuation in the absence of a deep interior core. As a way of approaching the full dimen-

sions of style, Altieri introduces Kantian aesthetics. Aesthetic shaping, Altieri argues, can be understood as a model for the ways in which people create all kinds of purposive structures; and aesthetic understanding can be adopted as a template for the attribution of purposiveness, the way in which people apprehend the internal relations of "expressions" as the result of intentional acts. In both instances, people experience an obligation to bring their "first-person" dispositions into alignment with "third-person" or impersonal criteria of judgment, in the process defining and realizing themselves by appealing to communally held standards and modes of understanding.

From here, Altieri develops a skeletal ethic that focuses on "making the symbolic more responsive to differences among practices and making agents more capable of manipulating what the symbolic order can provide them as powers and entitlements" (167). And then, in a final chapter, he spells out "two basic imperatives for politics" that follow on his account of subjective agency: "that we foster institutions which keep continual pressure on us to present justifications appealing beyond the circle where we are secure in our assessments, and that we consider the fundamental political value to be the activity of responding to such pressures civilly and with a desire for justice" (230).

As the quoted passages may already have suggested, it is not immediately apparent exactly what this book does or why it does it. It does not describe something that already exists, nor does it analyze, nor does it exhort. With a few exceptions, it does not engage in detailed, extended critical readings of other philosophers, even of Spinoza and Hegel, who are generally viewed from a distance. What it does is generate arguments of great abstractness, often presented as adjustments of arguments from previous philosophers considered to be in the main friendly to the overall enterprise. And the reason it does so is, apparently, to provide a philosophical sanction for attitudes and ways of thinking that Altieri considers praiseworthy. The least civil formulation of the project of *Subjective Agency* would be to locate reasons for a good conscience, a sense of grounding, a historico-theoretical warrant for doing what we feel needs to be done anyway, but for other, nontheoretical reasons. Need plays, in fact, an unusually prominent role in Altieri's discourse, which continually refers to "the argument I need," "the contrastive ground I need," "the role I want this structure to play," the fact that he "need[s] a distinctive realm of the ethical," and so on. The dust-jacket blurb begins by saying that "For the past decade, the most pressing need in the humanities has been"—for a book just like this one. In this respect, the argument itself mimes and reinforces aspects of its own message by proceeding as though inconsistent or incongruous elements, e.g., interiority, can be ignored if not eliminated.

This pruning impulse is virtually responsible for the "expressivist tradition" itself, all the participants in which have contrary elements to be excised or argued around—Spinoza's religion, Kant's first two Critiques, Hegel's version of historicism and his emphasis on the state, parts of Wittgenstein—that make it seem on balance less a genuine philosophical consensus than a heavily censored construct. "Since I am the one who gets to establish the criteria here," as Altieri says at one point, he can of course construct away (148). But at a deeper level, what Altieri casts as a desirable "will to power over one's situation" has also been applied, in his discourse, to the construc-

tion of a theoretical model of the subject itself (129). After a while, a reader begins to notice that despite the formidable complexity of the prose, certain things are missing from the Altierian subject. Chief among these is what is commonly thought of as subjectivity itself—the feelings, thoughts, responses, and perceptions that seem both involuntary and deeply personal, the whole range of “inner” phenomena not easily coordinated with a “third-person” perspective, as they are not immediately “articulate as purposive, and hence as capable of bearing responsibility” (129).

More precisely, Altieri’s agents lack a proper unconscious. Altieri appears to sense some deep threat to ethical and social projects from the various forms of unconsciousness posited by psychoanalytic and postmodern theory. Skewing judgments, producing disorderly symptoms, undercutting our best interests, the unconscious interferes with the articulations, determinations, negotiations, and attributions on which Altieri stakes his project. Thus, in a book about the subject, Freud is never mentioned, Lacan introduced only to be dismissed, Foucault consigned to the notes, Lyotard virtually absent, Derrida rendered ineffectual through paraphrase, Žižek almost totally ignored and his name consistently botched. The unconscious is not quite a world unto itself, but Altieri seems to wish it were. “I will ignore the many ways in which this model can go wrong,” he says on one occasion, bracketing off all forms of “self-delusion” and “manipulation by others” (94).

The indifference to counter-examples indicated here actually signals a more general resistance to exemplification as such, a willingness to set aside anything that ripples the surface of the theory. On the rare occasion when something more specific than the general principles of agency erupt into the discourse, the effect is bewildering: “Practices have rationales and rationales implicate ideal exemplars who extend beyond the specific social community into other levels of cultural traditions, a condition I find best illustrated by the four worthies who sat on Jefferson’s mantle. Moreover the demand for reasons can lead beyond images to affiliations . . .” (163). The resistance to exemplification is most pronounced, however, when the talk turns to “social implications,” which are kept scrupulously vague through nonspecific references to “the politics most academics espouse,” or clichés about “weakening the authority, if not the power, of the governing elite, and hence . . . fostering democratic values” (221, 8). Altieri defends this hypertheoretical generality with the cryptic pronouncement, which seems to reflect an embittered “Berkeley” perspective, that since “few people actually like or admire those who push the limits of free speech,” only a sustained concentration on “the formal structure of subjective investments” can ensure the integrity of the institutions on which the functioning of liberal society depends “when the inevitable disillusion sets in” (222).

One measure of the resilience of liberal institutions is their capacity to endure the expressions of Camille Paglia, whose *Vamps and Tramps*, 532 pages of limit-pushing materials produced during the past two years, was published in October 1994. Most academics certainly neither like nor admire her; her personal style offends, as when she boasts about being the *only* feminist to boast about how many people she’s punched out. But like all styles, hers can be considered under the rubric of subjective agency. Indeed, she and Altieri have a lot in common: both are prolific Italian-American academics who

speak rapidly, advocate libertarian views, and acknowledge the friendship of Robert Caserio, who must be a remarkable man. We can grasp the relation between them most efficiently, however, by asking what subjective agency would look like, extricated from Altieri's impacted abstractions and fifty-word sentences and set loose in the world. The answer: it might look like *Vamps and Tramps*, which both exemplifies Altieri's project and subjects it to fierce pressures.

So alarming and idiosyncratic is Paglia's style that many miss, or dismiss the substance. But as these essays, interviews, transcripts, and reviews demonstrate, an argument, predicated on expressive activity particularly in the field of sexuality, informs Paglia's manifold self-exhibitions. Altieri acknowledges that "accounting for the force of . . . gender will be a problem for me throughout this book," and says that he wants to get at those deep-laid aspects of subjectivity that are beneath such categories (233). For Paglia, there is nothing beneath sexual personae except, perhaps, a bed. Humans are sexed, and while their desires and identities can take deeply complex, indirect, and confused forms, we all fall under an obligation issuing from nature to get on with it. Or, as she puts it, "I would say to men: *get it up!* And to women I would say: *deal with it!*" (16).

While *Vamps and Tramps* is many things, there is no mistaking what it is at any given moment. It is a description of the facts of sexual life as Paglia sees them, a commentary on current cultural energies circulating around this subject, and, as the preceding quote demonstrates, a sermon. Paglia is perhaps more notorious for her style than for her substance, but this volume, containing a number of carefully considered, quietly eloquent passages and pieces that are entirely lacking in self-importance, including mature and original considerations of Princess Diana, Barbra Streisand, Jacqueline Onassis, and a beautifully evocative memoir of four gay male friends, makes a strong case for her as a writer plain and simple. It would be a pity, of course, if the impressive writerly virtues of some pieces were permitted to overshadow the bullying, clamoring, narcissistic outrageousness of others.

But what is most conspicuous here is the extraordinary range of her responsiveness, which embraces—among a great many other subjects—Madonna, Judy Garland, Bizet's *Carmen*, Monika Treut, Sandra Bernhard, the *Alice* books, *Lolita*, love poetry, the First Lady ("Kind of a Bitch: Why I Like Hillary Clinton"), Germaine Greer, Susan Sontag ("Sontag, Bloody Sontag"), Edward Said, and films and books too numerous to mention. *Vamps and Tramps* is best read quickly, a burst of reading followed by a period of quiet reflection in which memorable images and phrases swim before the mind's eye: Paglia shouting down anti-pornography activists in the streets of New York ("This is *bullshit!* *Bullshit!* [*makes aggressive Rolling Stones toss of the mikel*] *You people SUCK!*" [290]) . . . Paglia decrying "the creeping fascism of the date-rape hysteria" orchestrated by "Stalinist" feminists (37). . . Paglia informing students at Harvard, Princeton, Penn, and Johns Hopkins that their faculty stinks . . . Paglia responding briskly to "sanctimonious, nebbishy" Noam Chomsky (495) . . . Paglia predicting that if she and Sontag ever met, they "would slap each other silly" . . . (357).

One thing that sets Paglia apart from the general run of rival-slapping, faculty-trashing, lesbian-hating lesbian expressivists is her repeated call for

academic sobriety in the form of "a return to a general education based on hard facts and respect for scholarship" (385). It is not only the politics most academics espouse that excites her contempt, but their scholarship as well, precisely because the latter is too often placed at the service of the former. In a word, she attacks the tendency of scholarship to be need-driven rather than truth-driven, to conform to what we want rather than to what is.

Paglia earns her own stripes in this tricky area in the lead essay of the volume, "No Law in the Arena: a Pagan Theory of Sexuality," a long, six-part exploration of the complex interplay of sex, law, criminality, deviance, and culture. Here Paglia ventures into dark waters, arguing that: "beauty itself may be an incitement to destroy" (34); "cock teasing is a universal reality" (35); "sex crime is revenge against women for wounds already suffered by men as a class" (37); "we career women [argue] from expedience" and not from ethics in promoting abortion rights (39); women who decide to have abortions are agents of "Darwinian triage" (41); laws against sexual harassment impose "a genteel white lady's standards of decorum on everyone" (49); "middle-class white women have got to learn to talk trash with the rest of the human race" (51); most career women are unsuited for top managerial jobs (54); pornography does not subordinate women and should be protected, even cherished (*passim*); homosexuality is not an inborn trait and "not 'normal,'" but a (rare) adaptation (70); homosexuality may be "a pausing at the prepubescent stage when children anxiously band together by gender" (78); lesbians are a dull lot (*passim*); and that "hot sex and healthy children cannot be produced by eunuchs," i.e., by feminist-trained men (86).

The remarkable thing about this list of abrasions is it flatters nobody, including Paglia herself. Nobody needs these truths, if that's what they are. What really distinguishes it from the verities most academics espouse, however, is a pair of implicit equivalencies. The first is between the unacceptable and the desirable; and the second is between the unacceptable and the true. So various and kinetic, Paglia's thought is organized around two basic arguments: that people want what they disapprove of, and they deny what they know. She celebrates the first and seeks to correct the second. In both respects, she sets herself up as a specialist in, and a proponent of, "the many ways in which this model can go wrong."

Paglia's nearly absolute stylistic difference from Altieri reflects a range of divergent positions, attitudes, orientations, and prejudices. But these differences mask deeper convergent currents, ways in which each implies the other. She is not only the most flamboyant example of subjective agency—albeit an example that nearly overwhelms the theory it exemplifies—but also the "contrastive ground" Altieri really does need. He can say with justification that while Paglia can box her corner, others who are just as far out of the mainstream but less able to defend themselves must be able to count on a community commitment to a weakly specified liberalism that honors "expressions" in general. For her part, Paglia needs precisely such "frigid, head-tripping nerds" (a phrase she applies to Foucault [105]) as Altieri; they elicit much of the distinctive tang of her sensibility and without them there would be no Paglia.

One difference, however, remains. While Altieri envisions "two hundred readers" (247), Paglia can safely count on, let us say, many times that num-

ber. Why should this be, when Altieri addresses our pressing need by articulating notions from which dissent is difficult, and Paglia gives us a gross flood of ideas and impressions that remain minoritarian? Among the less obvious reasons may be that Altieri's emphasis on conscious control and civic responsibility makes *Subjective Agency* a virtuous but strangely weightless book. Having argued for a depthless subject, he can only make a shallow claim on his readers' sympathies. By contrast, Paglia's ecstatic, infuriated immersion in the superficialities of life, and in those inadmissible energies that elude and deform control is both gripping as spectacle and paradoxically deep in its appeal. People may not like or admire those who push the limits, but they do seem to want to read them.

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Geoffrey Galt Harpham

Aesthetics and Ideology, edited by George Levine. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994. Pp. ix + 316. \$48.00, cloth; \$20.00, paper.

In an age in which iconoclasm is old hat, subversion is co-optation, and protest itself is the slippery slope to bourgeois complacency, a truly good book about academic and readerly trends is an exceptional feat. Cultural materialism has made cultural analysis a matter for *a priori* suspicion (not necessarily a bad thing, of course), and so a book such as this one, which variously scrutinizes the discourse *about* cultural value, is a bold venture. Indeed, to identify a critical/theoretical zeitgeist is virtually impossible these days: to complain about the hegemony of the critical discourse about academic hegemony is to enter a world of peculiar solipsism, one that makes Romantic "inwardness" look downright accessible. But as this edition of essays makes emphatically clear, some of the most notable voices in the analysis of aesthetics and ideology belong to those who feel that aesthetics *as* ideology is a construct that has gotten out of hand. The motivating concern of this collection, then, is the critical study of literature as such; none of the essays rejects the implications of ideological superstructure, and none is eager to return to some of the more benighted pieties of New Criticism. What they share in common, however, is an eagerness to remember a means by which aesthetics, and even hermeneutics, can be meaningful to human endeavor.

The book is divided into four sections, each of which interrogates anew issues that are by now entirely familiar. The first section, *Contingency and Value*, contains essays by Arnold Rampersad and Myra Jehlen, and both indulge in gestures of historical self-positioning that are recognizable as all but *de rigueur*. Rampersad's essay, "Values Old and New," does not add information or chronicle a history of theory so much as it offers a straightforward polemic about the danger signs of polemics. Beginning with an admission of concern over the conference panel topic which initiated his discussion, he goes on to decry the process by which (as he sees it) a new antihumanism is quickly transforming itself into an old philistinism. This leads, he suggests, to a wholesale rejection of values that were only ever dimly understood in the first place, to be replaced by a set of devaluations and negative assump-

tions that are somewhat questionable. One of Rampersad's concluding assertions may well strike some as beyond the point of the current culture wars, but then again, his central claim is precisely that those fighting "the good fight" too frequently miss the point: "The fact that many 'dead white men' have not only anticipated objections to hegemonic views of culture but also proposed disruption and heterogeneity as intrinsic to genuine culture will doubtless disappoint some. However, this is the kind of disappointment with which we should attempt to live, the kind that should deepen our confidence in the wisdom of our basic enterprise, properly, and not chauvinistically, understood" (39). In "Literary Criticism at the Edge of the Millennium; or, From Here to History," Myra Jehlen contrasts essays she had written at different times for different volumes. In the wake of the collapse of the Iron Curtain, and with the acuity of corrective hindsight, she has come to conclude that the reflexivity that reveals the limits of any particular theory is the place in which "ideological criticism reveals itself more imbricated with formalist and aestheticist approaches than was visible earlier" (52).

These are claims that proceed by way of a debunking, not of the positive claims of ideological criticism so much as of the central focus of much ideological debunking. Put simply, most of the authors writing here are on the defensive about aesthetics, whatever their varying political biases. As such, George Levine's introductory essay, "Reclaiming the Aesthetic," announces the volume's intention by insisting upon what the aesthetic is *not*: "And what I am attempting in this book and this opening chapter is movement toward a climate of opinion that will not identify deference to the text and admiration of it with political complicity, will not assume that the text is a kind of enemy to be arrested, will not inevitably associate the 'literary' with a reactionary right or dismiss the aesthetic as a strategy of mystification of the status quo" (3). The text is not an enemy to be arrested? It seems nothing short of startling that such contentions need be made at all. But they do, and so Levine proceeds to a statement of purpose that tries to find a way out of the embarrassment of a good read: "More positively, I am trying to imagine the aesthetic as a mode engaged richly and complexly with moral and political issues, but a mode that operates differently from others and contributes in distinctive ways to the possibilities of human fulfilment and connection" (3).

To this end, the second section of the volume is entitled "Rewriting the History of the Aesthetic." Containing articles by Oscar Kenshur, Mary Poovey, Frances Ferguson and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, it seems a loosely unified—though still provocative—assemblage of figures from literary history uniquely suitable to the task of decriminalizing the aesthetic. Kenshur, for example, studies the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth, and asserts that his "absolutization of the aesthetic served not to remove it from the hurly-burly of political strife, but rather to transform it into a powerful instrument for demystifying other ideas" (59). In "Aesthetics and Political Economy in the Eighteenth Century: The Place of Gender in the Social Constitution of Knowledge," Mary Poovey challenges Barbara Herrnstein Smith's targeting of "aesthetic ideology" as rationalizations in bad faith, and then looks to the example of Mary Wollstonecraft, who "was the first to recognize that one of the devastating effects of the modern constitution of knowledge was the cultural

denigration of women *alongside* (as part of) the valorization of aesthetic beauty" (81).

These latter claims work nicely with the section about "Liberatory Aesthetics," a collection of explicit political readings by Derek Attridge ("Literary Form and the Demands of Politics: Otherness in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*"), Regenia Gagnier ("A Critique of Practical Aesthetics"), and Cheryl A. Wall ("On Freedom and the Will to Adorn: Debating Aesthetics and/as Ideology in African American Literature"). It is noteworthy that the claims for the value of the aesthetic yield necessarily defensive postures, anxious assurances of ideological awareness, and often indignant protestations of fully credentialed political commitment. The emerging tendency is to answer the inhospitality toward the aesthetic with a parry and thrust: not merely ideologically inflected, the aesthetic is crucially conscious of historical exigency, or uniquely sensitive to populist appeals. Further—and more to the point—to banish it from the Republic of putatively anti-bourgeois professors of literature would be to grant the forces of hegemony their final victory. Derek Attridge's essay is paradigmatic in this regard: "Coetzee's handling of formal properties is bound up with the capacity of his work to engage with—to stage, confront, apprehend, explore—*otherness*, and in this engagement it broaches the most fundamental and widely significant issues involved in any consideration of ethics and politics. I also believe that what happens in Coetzee's work, and in responses to it, is only a more dramatic version of the processes involved in all literary uses of the formal properties and potentialities of language" (244).

Attridge thus addresses an issue which is bound to be of increasing interest to critics: can formalism be something more than the enshrined Other of political engagement? The prescribed answer here, of course is yes: yes, formalism has its place, or yes, formalism *is* the place in which such engagements are most persuasively performed. But this may be a means of collapsing categories, in ways that cancel the heuristic value of categorization. Thus, the section of this volume which is potentially the most combative, is in fact the most conciliatory. Entitled "Form, Disinterest, and Ideology," it contains essays by Peter Brooks ("Aesthetics and Ideology—What Happened to Poetics?"), Maria Dibattista ("'Sabbath Eyes': Ideology and the Writer's Gaze"), Susan J. Wolfson ("'Romantic Ideology' and the Values of Aesthetic Form"), and William Keach ("'Words Are Things': Romantic Ideology and the Matter of Poetic Language"). For Susan Wolfson, as for the others writing in this collection, the value of close reading has lately been underestimated. Thus, to escape the charge of ideological co-optation, we should show how poetic form "can be involved in processes of ideological critique—how, in fact, attention to aesthetic formation in its particularities, densities, and complexities can be generated out of the very criticism that has emerged in antithesis to it" (190). Similarly William Keach would remind us that formalism is no enemy of the revolution: "The current task, as I see it, is to understand how critically to rethink and affirm the materiality of formal articulation in art and literature—not just in an imagined socialist future, but in cultural situations that remorselessly reify, commodify, fetishize such articulation. This is a version, of course, of what the Romantics themselves had to do, in economic and social circumstances that crucially anticipate our own"

(221).

These represent important assertions, for they are insightful, observant, and emphatically need to be made. The latter day dismissal of aesthetics and aesthetic form in the name of political maturity has been an unfortunate phenomenon, and the facts of the case need, certainly, to be re-stated as often as possible. But we also need to think hard about the implications of defending the critique of so-called aesthetic ideology by insisting that aesthetics was always primarily in the service of critique. This is not to say at all that such arguments are mere grasps at straws, only that we are in danger of misunderstanding, or at least of under-valuing, our own commitments to the text. Neither am I claiming that the contributors to this volume have gravely oversimplified the terms of their respective arguments. But we must exercise a special vigilance in this case; to defend the aesthetic on the grounds that it was always self-conscious ideology is to offer it up for cannibalization.

Alas, it is consumption indeed which we begin and end with—consuming texts, it is only natural that we wonder about our impulses to spit them out. But the aesthetic is always reconstituting itself, and if we have developed a different stomach for it, as it were, then we will have to learn a healthy way of digesting it. This volume is a welcome aid to such an endeavor.

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High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood, by Justin Wyatt. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. Pp. x + 237. \$35.00, cloth; \$17.95, paper.

Having been a marketing analyst in Hollywood before becoming an academic professional, Justin Wyatt is especially qualified to examine the rise and dominance of high concept filmmaking in Hollywood since the mid-1970s. In *High Concept*, Wyatt takes his cue from the work of David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1985]), who he says “develop classical Hollywood cinema as a particular stylistic system with clear economic and aesthetic determinants” (16). Wyatt praises Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson’s seminal work, while managing to point out that significant economic and institutional changes have occurred in Hollywood since 1960, making it necessary to examine how recently “the conglomeration of the film industry and the rise of television, new marketing methods, and changing distribution strategies—have extended and modified some significant traits of the classical model” (16).

Wyatt’s first task is to define, or as he says “redefine,” high concept. He cites two apocryphal Hollywood stories about the origin and use of the term. The first gives Barry Diller, programming director at ABC in the early 1970s, credit for coming up with and exploiting high concept. According to Wyatt, “[s]ince Diller needed stories which could be easily summarized for a thirty-second television spot, he approved those projects which could be sold in a single sentence” (8). Diller’s ideas for high concept TV movies produced hits like *Brian’s Song* (1971) and *That Certain Summer* (1972), “whose themes and

appeal were immediately obvious" (8). Indeed, Diller's model is still in place for TV movies today, as the recent trio of Amy Fisher movies, one for each network, would suggest. The other potential source of the high concept approach could be Disney's Michael Eisner; "[a]ccording to [Jeffrey] Katzenberg, Eisner used high concept while working as a creative executive at Paramount to describe a unique idea whose originality could be conveyed briefly" (8). Regardless of who came up with the idea, the basic premise of high concept filmmaking is the same. As Wyatt suggests, "one can think of high concept as comprising 'the look, the hook, and the book.' The look of the images, the marketing hooks, and the reduced narratives form the cornerstones of high concept" (22).

Having redefined high concept as "the look, the hook, and the book," Wyatt feels the need to defend his project from would be detractors. He states, "[t]he attempt to construct this model of high concept should not be viewed as an academic spin on the critics' condemnation of commercial filmmaking, nor as an attempt to glorify the popular. Rather the project addresses the initially curious supposition that *Grease*, along with *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977), and *Saturday Night Fever*, is of greater significance to American film history than the critically and institutionally recognized films of the period . . ." (22). The question Wyatt is anticipating here is whether or not popular films should be given as much critical attention as the more "serious" films of the last twenty years. The obvious answer here, as demonstrated by the recent boom of cultural and American studies programs in academia, is absolutely. In fact, looking at the "popular" has increasingly become the norm in academic film studies as a recent course on the films of Keanu Reeves at Cal Arts indicates. In this light, it is a bit odd that Wyatt warns "canon builders" not to leave off popular films as "through understanding the commercial recipe and economic determinants of a film like *Grease*, one can gain a true appreciation of the contemporary landscape of American film—a landscape which has nurtured and privileged the high concept film" (22). It is only after digging into *High Concept* that this curious defense of an approach to film which considers the economic realities of the industry, at a time when such approaches are commonplace, begins to make sense. For Wyatt is not attempting to include a discussion of the economic determinants in one or two films, but rather wants to show how pervasive the high concept model is in shaping most of the current Hollywood commercial product. Consequently, his book focuses, perhaps too narrowly for current academic tastes, on the economic aspects of high concept to the exclusion of other concerns.

That said, Wyatt's thorough analysis of the extent to which economic factors determine the "image and high concept style" of contemporary Hollywood cinema might be said to justify his exclusive focus on those factors. He sets up as his primary model the distinction between the high concept film *Grease* (1978), and the "low concept" *All That Jazz* (1979). According to Wyatt, *Grease* can be considered high concept for a variety of reasons. He cites the film's use of the stars John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John to attract a young audience, as well as "a host of media stars evoking the film's period of the 50's," to attract older audiences seeking the film's nostalgia. (4) He goes on to discuss the addition to the original Broadway score of two songs,

"You're the One That I Want" and "Hopelessly Devoted to You," which became hits in part for their "'contemporary' 70's sound." He further discusses the marketing of the film paying particular attention to the film's logo "a small car containing the word 'Grease' written in a fluid, grease-like style" (4). In short, he argues that every facet of the film, from pre-production through release, can, and should, be analyzed in economic terms. In contrast, *All That Jazz*, while critically praised, lacks all of the high concept qualities that made *Grease* such a hit, and financial success. It is therefore an example of the "low concept" filmmaking in which Hollywood is less and less involved.

While Wyatt's interpretation of *Grease*, and the hundreds of other films he examines, is not close reading in the classic style, it is a careful analysis of the economic determinants of the film. Wyatt's willingness to dig deeply into the marketing campaigns of various high concept films (he provides numerous lists and charts of movies that fit the bill) is perhaps the most revealing part of his book. He also shows how some films fail in their efforts to conform to the high concept model—notably a discussion of the poster campaign for *The Hunger* (1983) with Catherine Deneuve and David Bowie. He explains how high concept leads to more high concept as studios prefer to take fewer risks, and he discusses the effects of studio conglomeration, once again offering revealing charts and tables in support. In the end, his book is, as promised, a detailed look at the inner workings of the Hollywood economic system and how that system has shaped the type and look of mainstream films since the 1970s.

Wyatt's book is one of those studies that is bound to enforce a new way of considering contemporary Hollywood cinema. He presents a new way to examine high concept film in greater detail instead of dismissing it as just another crassly commercial product. As is the case with most methods of analyzing film, looking at films in terms of their conformity to high concept rules will prove most useful when combining the economic analysis with a variety of other approaches. His book is a bit high concept itself, though perhaps not to its detriment. It is full of charts, graphs, pictures and tables and somewhat mirrors the concern for style and "look and hook" that current Hollywood cinema displays, and may reflect a current trend in academia for more enticing publishing methods; however, its slickness should not detract from its potential usefulness in current film studies.