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Deconstruction-Bashing

Against Deconstruction, by John M. Ellis. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Pp. x + 168. \$9.95 (paper).

John Ellis' *Against Deconstruction* is a cranky book, that takes as its target not only deconstruction but also what Ellis sees as the general laissez-faire stance of current theory, notably of Harold Bloom's theory of misreading and Stanley Fish's brand of reader-response criticism. To give a rough outline, Ellis begins by claiming that deconstruction has not engaged in debate and thus needs to do so (the preface). Despite this balanced call for dialogue, he launches an all-out attack. Ellis first criticizes what he identifies—largely through the work of Culler, Graff, and others—as the Derridean position. He claims that Derrida is illogical (chapter 1), that Derrida is wrong on Saussure (everyone knows that writing doesn't precede speech) (chapter 2), and that deconstruction does not achieve anything significant in the great pantheon of the progress of ideas, but merely announces its own newness (chapter 3).

After dispatching deconstruction in the first half of the book, Ellis turns his sights to the rest of the critical field. In chapter 4, he criticizes the general claim that "every interpretation is a misinterpretation." In his fifth chapter, he takes on both deconstruction and reader-response theory, linking them together in the misguided project of laissez-faire textuality, where anything goes. Taking the heat off Derrida, Stanley Fish is the chief recipient of the bashing here. In chapter 6, Ellis shifts focus and returns to deconstruction, criticizing the general scheme of deconstructive rhetoric (the penchant for setting up false oppositions and thus dramatic reversals, the injection of new and strange terminology, the tendency to obscurity). In his conclusion, Ellis continues his spanking: deconstruction is a false novelty, predicated on the rhetoric of shock, and not genuinely theoretical.

There are a number of problems with Ellis' arguments and attacks that might be worth noting since his book seems indicative of the current backlash against deconstruction in particular as well as against theory in general, spearheaded by old-guard critics like Ellis, evidenced in more popular books like *Tenured Radicals*, and played out in some ways in the dispute over de Man's corpus.

First, Ellis is poorly informed in his claim that deconstruction has not engaged in debate. It seems to me that the most significant debate in theory during the past twenty years has been over deconstruction, first in its ascension and now in its wane in hegemony. One should not minimize the initial debates—the attacks of Abrams, Bate, Wellek, Graff, Crews, etc.—as well as the general attack on the politics, or rather lack of politics, of deconstruction. More recently, the furor over the case of Paul de Man demonstrates the continuing vibrancy of the debate. Also, the recent ascension of the new historicism has clearly been in part a response to the limitations of prevalent "intrinsic" modes of deconstructive reading. By the same token, in part the "Against Theory" movement has been a reaction to the theoretical hegemony of deconstruction.

Ellis is also ill informed about deconstruction itself. He quotes almost exclusively from secondary sources and paraphrases—what Culler or Leitch or Norris says about Derrida—rather than relying on primary sources (see, for

instance, his "collection of statements" on p. 74). He makes no distinction between Derrida and American practitioners of deconstruction, a distinction that has been salient in defining the programs of each. He barely mentions de Man or takes into account de Man's enormous sway in this country.

Second, Ellis frames his arguments by providing sweeping generalizations of an alleged deconstructive point rather than carefully citing and analyzing a specific argument. It would take too long here to unpack Ellis' various assertions contra-Derrida, but a convenient case in point is his chapter attacking the phrase, "every interpretation is a misinterpretation." Although the target—named once in a footnote and linked rather dubiously with the Derridean enterprise—is Harold Bloom, it could as well be the Morris Zapp of David Lodge's *Small World* ("every decoding is another encoding"). Taking such a tag-line as a principal point in argument might serve a polemical service, but it does not make for accurate or cogent argument. An analysis like P. D. Juhl's "Playing with Texts: Can Deconstruction Account for Critical Practice?," arguing that de Man's theory tacitly precludes intention, is much more specifically documented and closely argued than Ellis' extraordinarily broad claims.

Also, that Ellis conflates Derrida and deconstruction with Bloom's theory of misreading and Fish's theory of interpretive communities further stretches the seams of coherence. Punch-drunk, it appears that after taking on Derrida in the first half of the book, he is taking on all comers in the second half.

Third, Ellis' rhetoric is oddly strident and, at points, contemptuous and vituperative. Over and over he says that deconstruction is a failure, illogical, wrong, vacuous, counterproductive, indicates intellectual weakness, has no coherence or force, is obscure and baffling, nonsensical and outdated, bewildering, trivial, unthinking, incoherent and ineffective, antitheoretical, a deficit to the critical conversation. In Ellis' bookkeeping of the recent theoretical scene, he declares "the net result of the good and bad effects of deconstruction . . . [to be] clearly on the minus side" (89), adding up to bankruptcy and folly (134). Despite his banner of logic, the heart of Ellis' argument is his strident polemic rather than careful documentation, precise reading, and rigorous argument.

In part, Ellis' reaction to Derrida and deconstruction is indicative not of his spleen, but of his position within the analytical philosophical tradition. Ellis' tacit hero is Wittgenstein (see 42–44), which comes as no surprise to readers of his earlier *The Theory of Literary Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). At core, Ellis essentially repeats Elizabeth Anscombe's (Wittgenstein's prize student) famous quip: "Of course everybody knows everything written on the continent is just gas." In fact, there is a bizarre moment when Ellis engages in a Germanophile bias against the French. He exempts Iser and Jauss from his aspersions on reader response in a footnote (see 113–14), but reduces deconstruction to French hype and temper: "Derrida makes theory what in Barthes and French intellectualism generally is simply temperament. But surely this intransigent intellectual elitism is . . . conformist in its following the patterns of thought of orthodox Parisian intellectualism but uncondusive to genuinely probing, original thought" (85). He goes on to suggest that it has only been accepted because of America's willingness to welcome refugees (86). He further elaborates his strong bias

against the French, this time denigrating them as primitive: "Its [deconstruction's] theoretical content is little more than a reactive response to the theoretically primitive situation in which it arose" (88). Neanderthal, no doubt.

The recent collection, *Redrawing the Lines: Analytic Philosophy, Deconstruction, and Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), edited by Reed Way Dasenbrock, offers a refreshing counter-example to Ellis' dismissive approach. In it, Dasenbrock provides an excellent introduction that reviews the traditional fissure between analytical and continental philosophy and that aligns the players on each side. Overall, in a series of essays by Henry Staten, Michel Fischer, Jules Law, Christopher Norris, Richard Rorty, Anthony Cascardi, and others, the collection examines the conjunction between these two parallel but strangely independent traditions, attempting to establish a genuine dialogue between them. By turns, the essays match up key figures from each side: Wittgenstein and Derrida, Lyotard and Rawls, Davidson and de Man, and so on.

Ellis attempts no such dialogue. Perhaps the more pressing issue concerning (the denunciation of) deconstruction is not a question of the logical viability of its tenets but of its institutional placement and situation. In other words, I would suggest that we shift the coordinates of the discussion from the field of logic and the allegedly disinterested adjudication of claims there to the field of the institution of literature and theory, where many other forces come into play. Among those forces are professional interest, affiliation(s) both inside and outside the academy, and competition between various approach groups, and the game carries with it real and discernible stakes, most obviously in hiring, in tenure decisions, and in what gets published.

Seeing it in this light, then, what is finally significant about Ellis' book is certainly not its cogency or lack of cogency of argument, but its intervention in the institutional field and its statement of interest. Its attack-mode is an indication of institutional jousting, and its stridency an indication of the perceived seriousness of the stakes. It offers testimony to the swing in the theory market and to the assertion of interests of various critics trying to regain the ground ceded during the deconstructive wars of the late '70's and early '80's. As its backcover blurbs and early reviews make clear—see Peter Demetz's blurb that the book exhibits "an effective and articulate combination of logical reasoning, mastery of sources, and informed irony," or Frank Kermode's comment that "Ellis argues with force and clarity"—it fills a need, an institutional void, and speaks for many. Less kindly, we could say that it demonstrates a kind of theory envy, celebrating the fall of an arrogantly powerful figure and giving deconstructive theory—or really, as I've suggested, what is institutionally grouped under the rubric of deconstruction—its comeuppance.

Somehow, Ellis' polemic seems to fit the new repression of the nineties: a fundamentalist preacher of logic and progress, urging high tariffs to guard against the stylishly slick and sexy French imports, he rails against the previous age of promiscuous textuality.

When the Moon Waxes Red. Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics, by Trinh T. Minh-ha. New York & London: Routledge, 1991. Pp. ix + 252. \$45.00 (cloth); \$14.95 (paper).

The title and subtitle of Trinh T. Minh-ha's first collection of essays cry out for explication, together suggesting the divergent, yet finally supportive approaches to critical analysis that enhance the author's thought. On one hand, the title's poetic imagery refers to the definition in the introduction, "Yellow Sprouts," of the moon as "both the time when no thought arises and the time when the primal energy stirs into motion" (1). This "process of infinite beginnings" and its waxing red relates to the paradoxical act of "naming critically," i.e. "to dive headlong into the abyss of un-naming," toward those necessarily positional, transitional "moments when things take on a proper name" (2). On the other hand, the terms of the subtitle function together to depict the "struggle . . . to recompose subjectivity and praxis while displacing the way cultural strategies relate to one another in the constitution of social and political life" (2). Hence the collection's discordance of "varying tones and modes of address," the context-bound "irregularities of [the quoted materials] treatment" that Trinh underscores as "both functionally and strategically necessary to the non-univocal nature of the texts, whose meanings are not only verbal but also visual" (ix), referring thereby to the film stills printed opposite each essay's title page.

However sympathetic the reader may be to Trinh's project, she/he recognizes this opening acknowledgement as a deliberate move to un-reconcile, as it were, the juxtaposition of texts published over a decade while clarifying, if not justifying, the difficulties inherent to this strategy. To emphasize further such strategies, Trinh explains in "Yellow Sprouts" the concepts that form the titles of the section divisions. "No Master Territories" (section I) refers to the shifting terms and moments of discursive, representational and cultural relations: "In the renewed terrain of struggle and of deterritorialized subjectivities, no moon-lover can really claim possession of the soft light that illuminates towns, villages, forests and fields" (3). Just as this struggle is ever "in-between," the figurations of woman ("She, of the Interval," section II), crisscross "more than one territory at a time, . . . her (un)location is necessarily the shifting and contextual interval between arrested boundaries" (4). This "heterogeneity of feminist struggles and its plurivocal projects" rejects monolithic constructs in a quest for non-closure, for "the Third Scenario: No Light No Shade" (section III) "where she is born anew" (6-7). Trinh seeks, then, the third term, the interval "between rational and irrational enslavement," not only for the critical and political, but also the professional tasks at hand. For, "in the existing regime of frenzied 'disciplinarization,' such breach in the regularity of the system constitutes the critical moment of disequilibrium and dis/illumination when Buddha may be defined as 'a cactus in the moonlight'" (8).

This quoted material suggests ways in which Trinh's essays provoke the reader to make connections, to draw conclusions, in a non-closural process of reading that is also writing, a strategy "in-between" that reveals Trinh's affinities to Barthes, to his/her "notion of the Void" celebrated in essay 13 ("The Plural Void: Barthes and Asia," 1982). This concept of "a text in which the

(named) Void moves beneath multiple forms, showing us at each pause in its displacement, a new face" (209), defines well Trinh's own work. For the reader understands quickly that Trinh engages the topics of "representation, gender, and cultural politics" as "the mediator-storyteller" described in essay 1 ("Cotton and Iron," 1990), "at once a creator, a delighter, and a teacher," "through whom truth is summoned to unwind itself to the audience" (13). The concern that recurs in each essay and that resonates with the terms valorized in the section subtitles, is the "challenge," "how can one re-create without re-circulating domination?" (15). We can then understand each text/section as a necessarily partial, non-closural *essai*: "This shuttling in-between frontiers is a working out of and an appeal to another sensibility, another consciousness of the condition of marginality: that in which marginality is the condition of the center" (18).

Shuttling in-between, "displacing is a way of surviving . . . an impossible, truthful story of living in-between regimens of truth" (21). This overarching project of unsettling, un-locating territories and binaries underlies Trinh's reflections in the opening section on the documentary tradition and ethnographical filmmaking (essays 2, 3 & 4), and in the second section, the "interval" of which "she" is part appears in essays on political and gender implications of Western/male-dominated reading/viewing standards and of multiculturalism vis-à-vis artistic (filmic) creation (essays 5, 6 & 8). The collection's numerically central text (7) is also the one that best reveals Trinh's concerns and critical strategies of displacement towards/through feminist consciousness. The title page of *L'Innécriture: Un-Writing/Inmost Writing* (1983) faces six stills from Trinh's film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* that show hands in various states of motion, expression and rest, emerging from white sleeves before a white-clad torso. Like this gestural in-most/un-writing, the feminist project has been forced/is forced to reject labels, even the term "feminist," while seeking expressive vocabulary within a language inadequate to the tasks of writing and reading.

As a demonstration of responses by several French women writers (notably, Marie Cardinal and Hélène Cixous) to the writing/reading predicament, this essay is most recognizably targeted to a "scholarly" audience. Yet, preceded and followed by essays 6 & 8, in which Trinh directly addresses different aspects of her own artistic activities, "inmost/un-writing" serves as a strategic locus of displacement, of the interval and of the quest for "the Third Scenario" (section III). Responding to remarks of two visiting writers from Martinique and Guadeloupe, Trinh begins this section in essay 9 ("Bold Omissions and Minute Depictions," 1991) by raising, on one hand, the question of identity, her own perplexed situation between "they" ("trendy Euro-American intellectuals eager to recycle strains of subversion") and "us" (Third World women/migrants, objects of trendy scrutiny); on the other hand, the questions of "marginality," where the "challenge of the hyphenated reality lies in the hyphen itself: the *becoming* Asian-American; the realm in-between, where predetermined rules cannot fully apply" (157). Trinh concludes this essay by examining the difficulties of this mode of existence "in-between," suggesting artistic possibilities for transformation beyond the vexed problem of "otherness," and pursues further creative alternatives in the other essays of "the Third Scenario," with reference to the African novel, the filmic sound-

track, Barthes's writings, and tensions between art, theory and modes of censorship (essays 10, 12, 13 & 14).

It is, however, essay 11 ("The World as Foreign Land," 1989) that draws attention to the collection itself as an act of representation and cultural politics. In *Woman, Native, Other* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), Trinh briefly referred to audiences' demands for her to "express my difference," that "voice of difference likely to bring us *what we can't have* and to divert us from the monotony of sameness" (88, Trinh's emphasis). Recently, "intense skepticism," incited by the conversation between two Third World writers with which Trinh begins essay 9, "assaulted [her] as I realized the intricacy of my own participation in what had been indirectly pointed to here as a spurious, fashionable preoccupation of the West raised up for the sake of Western vanguardism and its desire to conserve itself as sovereign Subject of radical knowledge" (156). This assumption of "the dubious role of the Real Other to speak the 'truth' on otherness" is the starting point for essay 11, inspired by Trinh's no doubt exhausting participation in public events and publications on "the question of representation of the Other" (185). Trinh understands clearly that as an other being privileged, she "cannot speak and participate in the production of theories of resistance without bearing in mind she is among those who have been provided with the opportunity to speak her condition." Acknowledging that this postcolonialist other is "caught in the regime of *visibility* as deployed by the West," Trinh maintains that "in designating herself as one of the designated others . . . , it is also necessary that she actively maintains the dialectical relation between acceptance and refusal, between reversing and displacing that makes possible the ceaseless questioning of this regime" (186). She then pursues reflections on strategies for creatively employing this space offered to the privileged other as well as risks involved in this undertaking.

However, in each example cited in the preceding paragraph, Trinh turns away at a crucial moment from exploring deeply, directly, *her* privileged position that provides, in fact, the opportunity for publishing these essays, a position described with the disciplinary bluntness of our profession on the volume's back cover: "Trinh Minh-ha is Chancellor's Distinguished Professor in Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and Associate Professor of Cinema at San Francisco State University." By citing this, I do not begrudge Trinh her professional advancement, but do wonder at the "bold omission" of this ascension within Western academic institutions as a subject of her own "working out of another sensibility." What is "the Third Scenario" for someone titularly possessed by the Chancellor at Berkeley (in the Women's Studies program, no less) while shuttling across the Bay, in constant displacement in-between sites of expression, creation and employment? As she states in essay 14, "In a world of reification, of fixed disciplines and refined compartmentalizations, to affirm that 'I am a critic, not an artist,' or *vice-versa*, is to resort to a classification and a professional standard that ultimately serve to preserve the status quo" (226). As both critic *and* artist whose written critical works refer intertextually to her artistic projects, Trinh seeks to maintain actively the interval in-between master territories. Yet, even the very collection of these disparate essays, reprinted to allow their "irregularities" and "differences" to stand forth, implies a form of professional

territorialization and privilege that cannot remain unexamined. Given the author's own explicit challenge, to "re-create without re-circulating domination," and her project of self-designation within the "regime of visibility," Trinh must proceed further in her efforts of self-scrutiny, to provide for her readers/writers a more complete, if never closed, understanding of the cultural politics of *her* negotiation "in-between."

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Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America, by Patrick Brantlinger. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. Pp. xi + 212. \$39.50 (cloth); \$13.95 (paper).

In light of the hotly contested "political correctness" issue currently engaging members of the academic profession in the humanities and social sciences, Patrick Brantlinger's new book, *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America*, should serve as a welcome addition to the debate. An attempt to map out the history of an emerging discipline, Brantlinger's text offers a highly-informed account of the "main issues, questions, themes, [and] approaches" (x) which have given rise to the cultural studies paradigm in institutions of higher education in Britain and the United States. As a summary of the field, the book is indeed quite helpful and its extensive bibliography provides both an excellent starting point for anyone wishing to learn more about cultural studies and an opportunity for scholars already working in the area to expand their horizons of investigation.

Enlarging on a celebrated moment in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Brantlinger begins by reading Crusoe's discovery of a mysterious footprint as "a parable of all the forms of imperialism and political divisiveness that have divided people through history into masters and servants, the dominant and the dominated" (3). Crusoe, when confronted with the possibility of signs of life on his isolated island, attempts to calm his fears of "the Other" by convincing himself that the footprint is actually his own. For Brantlinger, "Crusoe's first intuition is right after all: Friday's footprint—or *the* footprint—was his own," because when Friday arrives on the island he proves to be little more than a "a dark copy of Crusoe, a shadow-self, prepared always to do his bidding" (2). A symbol of Crusoe's desire for mastery, the footprint serves also to reinforce Crusoe's solipsism: his inability to recognize the value and importance of traditions other than his own. As Brantlinger puts it, Crusoe "never learns the lesson which . . . is the main one 'cultural studies' has to offer: in order to understand ourselves, the discourses of 'the other'—of all the others—is that which we most urgently need to hear" (3).

Brantlinger's task in *Crusoe's Footprints* is to describe an emerging emphasis in contemporary critical practice: the need to move beyond the confines of literary study into a more broadly focussed analysis of social and cultural issues. Roughly summed up, cultural studies, by Brantlinger's account, might best be approached in the words of another cultural theorist. Hayden White, who somewhat curiously, given his involvement with the History of Con-

sciousness programme at the University of California at Santa Cruz, only figures parenthetically in *Crusoe's Footprints*. White's contention that "there is no value-neutral mode of emplotment, explanation, or even description of any field of events," and his insistence that "not only all interpretation, but also all language is politically motivated" (*Tropics of Discourse*, 129) are very much in line with the recognition, so central to cultural studies, of the inseparability of literature and politics.

Taking as one of his points of departure the increasingly widespread perception of a crisis in the humanities, Brantlinger situates the shift from literary to cultural studies within the context of the decline and fall rhetoric which, in recent years, has swept through educational institutions in Britain and the United States. Amidst cries of dissatisfaction over the quality of higher education, and the barrage of recent books and articles bemoaning the takeover of humanities departments by politically correct scholars and texts, cultural studies represents a consolidation of various social, political and theoretical interests. Although Brantlinger clearly advocates an innovative critical practice informed by cultural issues such as race, gender and class, he is also acutely aware of the danger of simply reverting to older, more traditional forms of social criticism. "At times," he writes, "the advocacy of cultural studies seems to express not much more than the desire to make intellectual work politically 'relevant' . . . by renewing a quite familiar type of cultural criticism" (25). On the one hand, this is an astute comment: it exhibits Brantlinger's willingness to enter into a debate with the very issues which he seeks to elucidate. On the other hand, however, one gets the sense here that more ought to have been said on the topic. What exactly are the differences between the sort of work being undertaken today in cultural studies programmes and earlier forms of social criticism? Presumably not all forms of cultural study run the risk of restoring criticism to its traditional patterns and uses. On the whole I admire the thorough-going and comprehensive nature of Brantlinger's analysis, but there are moments such as this when it seems to me as though just a few more explanatory and qualifying phrases might contribute a great deal to the argument.

One of the things which makes *Crusoe's Footprints* a particularly compelling and useful study is Brantlinger's sensitivity both to the sorts of debates which are likely to play a vital role in cultural studies in the years to come and to those debates which have already emerged amongst scholars actively engaged in the field. Despite this sensitivity, however, Brantlinger's treatment of the role of theory is somewhat puzzling. Contemporary critical theory, in its various manifestations, often intersects with cultural studies: both seek to reconceive the relationship between language and reality, and both call our attention to the way in which individual subjectivities are ideologically constructed. Indeed, as Brantlinger convincingly points out, Marxism, feminism, deconstruction and psychoanalysis all feed into the cultural studies paradigm because each of these theoretical positions moves beyond the text in its narrow New Critical formulations. Cultural studies, Brantlinger explains, "has not been merely a new sort of interdisciplinary academic practice, but a coalescing movement, a sort of magnet gathering the various theories that now go under the label 'theory' into a problematic and perhaps impossible synthesis" (10).

Debunking the conservative myth that theory has been responsible for the crisis in the humanities, Brantlinger counters by asserting that "theory is a response to crisis, not its cause" (10). What is interesting, though, is that just a few pages later Brantlinger underscores his earlier claim with the following proviso: "if crisis is inherent to the humanities, that is true not just because the highest humanistic values are contradicted by social reality, but also because theory, at least in some of its guises, fails to take into account the institutional, social, political forces that shape culture" (13). From exposing the myth that theory is responsible for a crisis in the humanities, Brantlinger now apparently revises his understanding of the situation by embracing that same myth, but acknowledging that theory, if only in "some of its guises," *should* be held accountable for the current state of crisis precisely because it does not address social and cultural issues. This apparent contradiction may well reflect Brantlinger's sensitivity to what he calls "a problematic and perhaps impossible synthesis" between various theories; it may also be indicative of some of the divisions and disjunctions which are currently dominating the field of cultural studies. For the most part, Brantlinger sees theory actively participating within a cultural studies framework, offering various perspectives from which many crucial issues might be addressed. But on occasion, as his criticism of some theory for its failure to take into account social and political contexts suggests, Brantlinger's involvement with competing positions and voices seems marked by hesitation. Although such hesitation might indeed prove a valuable means for enabling us to assess an "impossible synthesis," I remain slightly uneasy with Brantlinger's sometimes guarded approach to the intersection between theory and culture.

The final point I would like to make about *Crusoe's Footprints*—and I should say here that my criticisms are not only minor, but also admittedly shallow when considered alongside the range of scholarship evident in Brantlinger's text—has to do with Brantlinger's understanding of the lesson which we can all learn from cultural studies. "To put it simply," Brantlinger writes in his chapter on class, gender and race, "there are other traditions, not equal, not better or worse, higher or lower, but both human and different" (158). This, as the section on *Crusoe* in the opening pages of the text would indicate, is the main argument of Brantlinger's text. But if the value of cultural studies hinges on our ability to move towards a recognition of difference and otherness, Brantlinger may himself be guilty of a slight misconduct. While the book's subtitle announces the main focus of the study to be "Cultural Studies in Britain and America," Brantlinger, *en passant*, also mentions Canada. What troubles me about these references (ix, 34) is the way in which Canada and the U.S. are grouped together without anything specific having been said about Canada in Brantlinger's text. With these passing gestures, Brantlinger seems to manifest little sensitivity to *differences* between the two nations. Why invoke Canada at all? Far from contributing to the overall comprehensiveness of a study on the value of difference, the references to Canada leave me with the sense that, once again, a few qualifying phrases would have been most useful.

These small matters, however, do not seem to me indicative of a larger, more general, flaw in the study itself. A few troubling and unsatisfactory moments aside, *Crusoe's Footprints* remains an informative and impressively

wide-ranging summary of a field very much in need of scholarly attention. Although Brantlinger may not solve the political correctness controversy with this book, readers on either side of the debate will undoubtedly have much to talk about after a careful reading of this rewarding study.

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Ajay Heble

Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics, by Bruce R. Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Pp. 329. 11 illustrations. \$29.95.

Bruce Smith ends both his chapter on Shakespeare's sonnets and his book with this sentence: "If that connection [between male bonding and male homosexuality] now seems clearer, this book will have done in a small way what Shakespeare's sonnets did so much more expansively in the sixteenth century: out of already familiar characters and plots, ideas and feelings, it will have created a more liberally imagined world for one of the many modes of human sexual desire" (329). This final characterization of *Homosexual Desire in Renaissance England* as liberal in spirit (Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* being recalled at the close) seems just and well-earned. The book reflects a strong commitment on Smith's part to a tolerant, non-confrontational, historically informed, and cultivated discourse of humane letters. It promotes literature as anti-totalitarian in essence, and as the discursive locus of subjective desires and experiences normally excluded from moral, medical and legal consideration. Relying primarily but not exclusively on literary texts, it indicates the broad dispersal and contextual variation of male homosexual desire during the English Renaissance, but then also traces the diverse cultural effects and alignments of such desire back through Western history to Greece and Rome. If homosexual desire and practice remain exclusively male in this book, it is because, according to Smith, sex between women remains virtually beyond cultural or legal cognizance in Elizabethan England.

While giving full recognition to theological, biological, and legal conceptions (not to mention "values") under which homosexuality has been proscribed in the past, the book nevertheless indicates how pervasively male homosexual desire has been implicated in the *civil* construction of Western culture. A plea for civil tolerance of this mode of desire among others is therefore virtually built into Smith's account of "Shakespeare's England" and its antecedents. In short, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* is a work of liberal education, and never more so than when it is incorporating and revising the principal relevant work of anti-liberal theorists like Michel Foucault and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Indeed, the supposedly anti-humanist view that sexuality transpires in and through language, not independently of it, lends itself strongly to Smith's humanistic revision, since it can then be said that literary texts continue to manifest rather than merely document historical sexualities.

Despite the continuing pertinence of left critiques of liberal humanism, including ones produced in gay-studies contexts, Smith's avowedly "old-

fashioned" book makes a strong showing. That it does so is partly context-dependent. It appears at a time when attacks on "liberalism" from the political and purportedly educational right have sunk to unprecedented lows of ignorance and opportunism. The determination of the right to characterize "our" culture as exclusively (and heterosexually) "Judaean-Christian" not only precludes recognition of its heterogeneity, but virtually erases classical antiquity and its indispensable *secular* heritage from consciousness. To study the Renaissance on such a basis is pointless if not impossible, while current ill-motivated abuse of "homosexuality" is only one manifestation of an impoverishing cultural illiteracy now being touted as high-minded traditionalism. To all this, *Homosexual Desire In Shakespeare's England* might serve as a corrective, though it is too much to hope it will be read by the "educational" bureaucrats and collaborating journalistic bigots it could enlighten. Without identifying the civilizing process with male homosexual desire as some thinkers of the Renaissance and classical antiquity did, Smith lets it be seen that no conscientious account of Western culture, let alone of Western civilization, can ignore such desire, or deny its widespread, positive representation in the Western literary canon.

The paradoxical public timeliness of this "old-fashioned" book is matched by a less paradoxical professional timeliness. Without detracting from the scholarly and critical originality of Smith's work, one could say that the book has arrived right on cue. It reprocesses a good deal of recent theoretical, historical and gay-studies work pertinent to English Renaissance interpretation under its rubric of "homosexual desire." New historicist and feminist as well as "carnavalesque" approaches are revised in keeping with the book's particular orientation, while some current interpretive disputes are modestly adjudicated from Smith's particular standpoint: for example, the constructivist vs. essentialist one about the constitution of human sexuality, and the (homo)sexualist vs. conventionalist one about what it means for boys to play women in the English public theater.

In addition to revising, Smith establishes some broad frames of reference for the discussion of homosexual representation during the English Renaissance. Drawing critically on the work of historians John Boswell and Alan Bray, Smith distinguishes between three phases of homosexual suppression in the early modern period: a late-medieval one of intensified theological attack (out of which came ubiquitous European legislation making "sodomy" a capital offense), a Tudor-Stuart one of secular, political suppression still colored by the language of religious denunciation, and a post-Renaissance one of social stigmatization. In Tudor-Stuart legal practice, however, which is interestingly if not exhaustively discussed by Smith, prosecutions for sodomy were surprisingly rare, whatever the intent of legislators may have been. Furthermore, the law took no cognizance of any male homosexual act except anal intercourse. As codified in Edward Coke's *Institutes*, sodomy was "a species of rape" (50) perpetrated on a minor. For it to have been a legal offense, anal penetration and ejaculation had to have occurred, while the testimony of two witnesses was additionally required. In effect, morally stringent prohibitions on "sodomy" were counteracted by narrow legal definitions of what constituted it, by onerous conditions of proof, and, according to Smith, by communal non-cooperation in prosecuting it. Many forms of behavior that

would now be regarded as distinctively homosexual were not legally or even socially identified as such in the Tudor-Stuart period, nor, of course, was there a category of the "homosexual." These forms of behavior could accordingly be pursued and represented, sometimes in scenarios of male friendship. Smith also suggests that reticence about the act "amongst Christians not to be named," as well as a narrow construction of it, may have facilitated the development of cultural matrices for homoerotic desire and practice, the public theater being one of these.

This state of affairs is not, however, regarded by Smith as one in which desire simply prevails against, or in spite of, repressive power. He insists that homosexual desire and practice are always politically overdetermined in complex and often contradictory ways, and, perhaps more importantly, that male homosexual desire can exist in congruent as well as deviant relation to phallocratic power and repression. The great antithetical cases in point are those of ancient Greece and Rome; in Greece, phallocratic power is homosexually constructed, while in Rome it is not. The Renaissance is something else again, yet it displays—avowals and disavowals notwithstanding—both "Greek" and "Roman" aspects in its highly complex power-sex-violence relations.

Moreover, despite its talk of unspeakable abomination, the Renaissance continues to betray its Roman antecedents in regarding male homosexuality to a significant degree as a matter of improper class and gender role-playing, not moral transgression *per se*. Or, to put it differently, talk of moral abomination often belies the real issue. Ruling class Roman fathers who wanted to protect their sons from pedophilic teaching in the "socratic" tradition would not necessarily refrain from anal intercourse with their own male slaves. (Francis Bacon's goings-on with his servants are recalled by Smith in this context.) The scandal of homosexuality in Rome was primarily a scandal of masculine power and identity, exemplified at its limit by the emperor Nero's openly playing the woman's part in male homosexual travesties of marriage. Similarly, the threat to masculine identity bemoaned in Juvenal's satires arises less from what "degenerate" men do in bed than how they look in public. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same goes for Elizabethan England, a fact to which both satirical and antitheatrical writing abundantly testify. (Enforcing "proper" codes of dress and conduct is, however, another matter, since, as Smith argues in an excellent Foucauldian reading of Juvenal, transgressor and censor typically find themselves caught up in the same "spiral" of pleasure and power—as Foucault puts it, "the power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing, and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing, or resisting" [cited p. 14]).

Although Smith's book is not all vanilla, so to speak, it will be professionally appreciated for its wide-ranging, learned, and non-threatening coverage of its topic, and for its exemplary readings across the major Elizabethan canon. (The minor one too, importantly represented in Smith's book by the seldom-discussed gay sonnets of Richard Barnfield.) Yet it isn't a book that simply wrote itself under the prevailing favorable conditions. Smith had to find a way to write it, one problem being that of systematically mapping rather than just occasionally noting representations of homosexual desire in the still broadly repressive, heterosexist culture of Shakespeare's England.

Smith's solution is to identify six stable "myths" of male homosexual desire that recur in Elizabethan literature: "Combatants and Comrades;" "The Passionate Shepherd;" "The Shipwrecked Youth;" "Knights in Shifts;" "Master and Minion;" "The Secret Sharer." Readers of Elizabethan literature will be able to anticipate up to a point which Shakespearean and other texts enact these scenarios; to this extent, Smith is vindicated in advance. In my view, his case holds up well in his sensitive close readings, including the one in which Marlowe is credited with establishing a homosexual *subjectivity* rather than just "desire" in the "Master and Minion" scenario of *Edward II*.

In short, Smith's method, which is attuned to the mythicizing dynamism of Renaissance cultural production, allows him to get an important job done. However, to say this isn't necessarily to recommend the method for general imitation. Its success depends on a certain tact, and one would not want to see these "myths" congealing into tiresomely solemn gay "archetypes." Indeed, the term "myth" belies a certain sophisticated archness and campy modernity in the titles Smith gives his scenarios; at times, moreover, he writes deconstructively of the "scripting"—the cultural *inscription*—of homosexual desire. Treating Smith as the Northrop Frye of gay studies would be inappropriate as well as critically unrewarding. No one should be too completely prevailed upon by his disarmingly "old-fashioned" approach either.

While Smith's scenarios register the diversity of homosexual desire in Shakespeare's England, this diversity also seems to begin and end in the aggressive male homosocial bond: witness Smith's closing sentence, quoted at the beginning of this review. He does indeed adopt Sedgwick's category of the "homosocial," yet he virtually forestalls her critique by anthropologically universalizing the homosocial bond, or, in other words, by "grounding" it in the human condition. Admittedly, his doing so leads to some excellent readings of murderous/amatory relations between men in *Coriolanus* (ones that explicitly displace heterosexual married relations), and ultimately allows him to discuss Shakespeare's sonnets as the site of an attempted humane separation between a public homosocial world and a private homosexual one. Yet the *necessary* priority and continuing proximity of the homosocial to the homosexual remains a dubious implicit contention of Smith's book. The point is not that Smith is obliged to repeat Sedgwick's critique or refuse to consider whether the homosocial bond is to all intents and purposes a cultural universal; indeed, it might be argued that the formative priority of the homosocial to the homosexual is an important question in Renaissance humanism, thematized in Shakespeare. Rather, the point is that informal *humanistic* argumentation, however anthropologically primed, cannot sustain the burden of proof in a matter as incipiently ideological and fraught with consequences as this one. A disarmingly "old fashioned" literary humanism is not only inadequate to these purposes, but is at risk of serving ideological purposes at odds with its own accommodating professions.

Prayer and Power: George Herbert and Renaissance Courtship by Michael C. Schoenfeldt. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991. Pp. xii + 345. \$49.95 (cloth); \$18.95 (paper).

Michael Schoenfeldt's penetrating study of Herbert's devotional poetry forcefully demonstrates its thorough immersion in the worldly, courtly concerns of Stuart England. Attending to the poetry's complex and nuanced political and social valences, Schoenfeldt discovers in Herbert's work a confluence of sacred and secular motives and modes that is characteristic both of the poet's individual sensibility and of the discursive practices of his age. The result is a stunning representation of Herbert as a poet who is "at once worldly and saintly, sophisticated and seraphic, whose sincere devotional motives are entangled in and enriched by the manipulative tactics of supplication that he practiced in the social world" and a brilliant account of the interpenetrations of personal and cultural anxieties in a remarkable body of work. By virtue of his theoretically informed yet deeply humanistic approach, Schoenfeldt deftly negotiates the Scylla and Charybdis of sentimentality and cynicism. He resists the comfortable (and comforting) readings of those critics who attempt to accommodate the restless tensions, unsettling aggressiveness, and disturbing instabilities of Herbert's poetry by reference to theological truisms or formalist aesthetics, but his is neither a debunking campaign nor an exercise in the deadeningly anti-humanistic cultural poetics practiced by some other contemporary critics, and he never condescends to his subject. Rather, Schoenfeldt persuasively argues that Herbert's self-conscious and deliberate exposure of his vacillations, contradictions, impure motives, and insurgent rebelliousness is itself a means by which the poems achieve their peculiar blend of lyrical intensity, personal authenticity, and spiritual rigor.

Prayer and Power is divided into three parts of two chapters each. Part One explores Herbert's explicit engagement with and criticism of the court, documenting the uneasy relationship of secular and divine power in the lyrics and revealing Herbert's fascination with the way divine power absorbs gestures of opposition and the way mortal submission exudes them. Part Two foregrounds the political components of affliction and petition throughout *The Temple*, conceiving God's art of imposing pain and the human art of supplication as corollary activities that reveal divine power. Part Three focuses on the final lyric in "The Church," "Love (3)," as the culmination of two kinds of behavior that Herbert's culture subjected to increasing regulation: table manners and sexual conduct. The organization of the three parts into binary chapters reflects Herbert's habitual doubleness, as he, for example, adopts the discourse of Stuart absolutism to address God but also criticizes the earthly hierarchy by reference to the divine. But, additionally, the organization usefully accommodates the critic's own restless double-takes, as he characteristically circles and re-circles the poems and the issues, subjecting them to multiple analyses from different perspectives. What links these three movements that explore topics as apparently diverse as Herbert's depiction of God as a torturer who imposes upon his creatures immense suffering and the nervous homoeroticism of "Love (3)" is their constant concern with the tactics of social and political supplication and with the diverse ways in which Herbert's poetry participates in the anxiety-fraught discourses of courtesy. Pro-

ceeding from the assumption that *The Temple* is inevitably implicated in the political, social, and biographical circumstances from which it originated, Schoenfeldt demonstrates how Herbert translates these circumstances into the very marrow of his devotional art.

At the heart of Herbert's poetry (and perhaps of all devotional literature) are issues of power, especially those inherent in the overwhelming disparity between an omnipotent God and his utterly dependent yet persistently rebellious creatures. By illustrating how the lyrics of *The Temple* artfully adopt, adapt, and critique the linguistic and tactical maneuvers of secular power and draw upon Herbert's own extensive social and political experience as a subject of and supplicant to secular authorities, Schoenfeldt establishes how fully Herbert's religious vision is dependent on his understanding of secular power, including that embodied in the Jacobean court and its elaborate patronage system, and how necessary the patterns of political authority are to Herbert's construction of a worshipping self. Then Schoenfeldt proceeds to show not only how the poetry acknowledges the perils inherent in the conflation of divine and political power (as reflected, for example, in the recurrent tension between the conception of God as a social superior and the realization that God far surpasses any earthly monarch); but also how the poems repeatedly problematize the exercise of both kinds of power. *The Temple*, in fact, chronicles a recurrent series of resistances, both to power itself and, most interestingly, to the attempts to defer to it; the book, Schoenfeldt writes, is a "record of the obstacles created by the self in its efforts to submit to divine authority." Many of these resistances are localized in the poems confronting the vexed question of serving God, where the division Herbert feels between the injunction to serve God and his inability to do so frequently results in a painful paralysis or in an equally humiliating acknowledgment of the taint of personal ambition implicit in the desire to serve.

In Schoenfeldt's second large section, the critic bravely (and illuminatingly) confronts an aspect of Herbert's poetry that is often slighted or elided entirely, its preoccupation with the imposition of physical pain as an instrument of power. Relating Herbert's depiction of God as a torturer to the coercive governmental practices of seventeenth-century England, Schoenfeldt exposes the poet's obsession with pain and suffering as itself rooted in the courtly world that so fully infuses his devotional practices. The challenge that Herbert's poems frequently undertake is to make sense of suffering without either censoring it or disguising its divine origins. Both fascinated and terrified by God's power to inflict pain, Herbert finally accepts the exercise of this power as a necessary assault on human illusions of self-sufficiency. Understanding God's wrath as beneficent and his afflictions as salutary, the poet ultimately recognizes that the Lord of Power is also and always the Lord of Love. But what complicates this movement is the concurrent conversion of the violence that God directs against mortals into the aggression that humans direct against God, especially in the process of prayer, which for Herbert is an "Engine against th' Almighty" ("Prayer [I]"). The tension between divine and human agency that repeatedly surfaces in *The Temple*, perhaps most poignantly in the poems centering on the pridefulness of art, is itself indicative of the process by which Herbert's attempts to represent and supplicate God continually threaten to appropriate divine power and raise unsettling ques-

tions of authority and dependence. Even the frequent expressions of self-deprecation become tools to manipulate the divine and to empower the mortal, just as the corresponding praises of God frequently deconstruct to reveal pride and covetousness beneath their pretence of humility. What is remarkable is God's willing condescension to be wounded by the petitions of his creatures. Much of the force of *The Temple* resides in the complexities of the tense divine-human relationship, as the mortal speaker of the poems continually discovers both the fearful power and the overwhelming beneficence of his maker.

The divine-human relationship is at the core of Herbert's triumphant conclusion of "The Church," the beautiful and deceptively simple "Love (3)." In a brilliant chapter that places the poem in the context of Renaissance courtesy literature, Schoenfeldt argues that the contest of courtesy between the human guest and divine host of "Love (3)" is actually a struggle for political superiority, a battle that is successfully resolved only by the coercive power of God. But if, from one perspective, "Love (3)" is a "problem comedy, containing deep political tensions," from another perspective it may be seen as a dramatization of the mutual love between God and his creature, daringly recounted in terms of human sexuality. In his final chapter, which focuses on "Love (3)" but is by no means limited to it, Schoenfeldt confidently and convincingly moves sexuality from the margins of Herbert criticism to the center of his discussion of courtship. In the process, he discovers that *The Temple* is a remarkable document in the history of sexuality. Noting the ambivalent engagement with and anxious recoil from sexuality characteristic of Herbert's lyrics, Schoenfeldt situates them on the fault line of the cultural movement that Foucault identifies as the beginning of an age of bourgeois repression. Seeing the androgynous host of "Love (3)" as embodying the sexual mystery at the center of spiritual experience, Schoenfeldt concludes that in its eroticized love for a deity addressed as both "Lord" and "my dear," the final lyric of "The Church" allows the culturally suppressed homoeroticism of *The Temple* to surface and, indeed, to be consummated. In the resonant conclusion of "Love (3)," the author observes, "Pleasure is at last reconciled to virtue."

The most strikingly original contributions of *Prayer and Power* are its groundbreaking discussions of sexuality and suffering in *The Temple*, which are likely to prove genuinely seminal in their influence. But Schoenfeldt brings a freshness to his encounters with even the most familiar topics of Herbert criticism, such as the problem of the pridefulness of art and the question of human service. This freshness is the result primarily of the attentiveness and sensitivity of his readings of a host of poems and of the new contexts that he provides for them. By seeing Herbert's work as part of the larger "civilizing process" of Western Europe and reading it through a variety of new lenses (e.g., courtesy literature, patronage relations, sexual theory, and social history), Schoenfeldt not only elucidates the social and political tensions and implications within the work, but also significantly revitalizes *The Temple* by freeing it from the constraints of the traditional approach via doctrinal and theological issues. Having re-situated the collection, he imagines it anew. Yet for all its productive immersion in revisionary new historicist concerns and practices, *Prayer and Power* succeeds most fully as a result of its close analysis of key texts, a technique which is the most enduring legacy of

the now old new criticism. Schoenfeldt's larger thesis is made convincing by aggressive and sustained readings of important poems, including "The Thanksgiving," "Affliction (1)," "Redemption," "The Forerunners," "The Colar," "The Temper (1)," "The Crosse," "The Flower," "The Storm," "Jordan (2)," "The Altar," "The Priesthood," "Gratefulnesse," "Artillerie," and "Sinnes Round," as well as "Love (3)." These insightful and informed analyses are distinguished by a characteristic resistance to easy or predictable resolutions.

If *Prayer and Power* is most noteworthy for placing Herbert's work within new and relatively unexploited social contexts, it also deserves credit for deftly employing more traditional resources for understanding Herbert, especially, and perhaps most effectively, the *Sermons* of Donne. In addition, Schoenfeldt also illuminates Herbert's cultural dilemmas and particular poems by reference to several specific examples of visual art. For instance, Dürer's *Self-Portrait* (1500) is cited as a telling visual parallel to the spiritual peril of imitating God that "The Thanksgiving" exposes, while Botticelli's hauntingly beautiful *Annunciation* (about 1490) is offered as a parallel representation of the spiritual turbulence attendant upon divine courtesy in "Love (3)," and Leonardo's homoerotic *St. John the Baptist* (1515-16) is presented as embodying a divine invitation in the guise of sexual solicitation that the same poem dramatizes. Schoenfeldt's point is not that any of these paintings influenced Herbert (who almost certainly saw none of them), but that they help us appreciate certain elements of the poet's linguistic artistry and provide specific cultural loci in which to place the poems' verbal gestures. The illustrations are strikingly apt, and Schoenfeldt's commentary on them is invariably perceptive. Finally, *Prayer and Power* also deserves commendation for offering a more organic account of Herbert's corpus than is customary in Herbert criticism. Schoenfeldt not only frequently turns to *The Country Parson*, the *Outlandish Proverbs*, the Latin poems, and the letters and orations as resources for comprehending the lyrics of "The Church," but he also fruitfully integrates these works (and their author's biography) into a new and coherent view of Herbert's canon.

Thesis-ridden books are often claustrophobic; their authors become so preoccupied with the relentless pursuit of narrow theses that they lose sight of broader issues. Happily, that is not the case with *Prayer and Power*. Notwithstanding its steady focus on a carefully delineated argument, it never becomes oppressive. On the contrary, rather than trimming Herbert's poetry to fit the thesis, the book expansively opens up and enlarges the scope of *The Temple*, perhaps because Schoenfeldt's conception of courtship is itself large and generous. Coupled with the refreshing clarity of its frequently graceful prose, this breadth of perspective makes *Prayer and Power* a notably hospitable book, though the inclusion of line numbers for Herbert's poems would have made it even more so. It is also, appropriately enough, a very courteous one. Thoroughly in command of the voluminous body of Herbert criticism, Schoenfeldt frequently engages other critics, generously acknowledging the work of others and always couching his disagreements in a friendly tone. There are, however, an excessive number of citations of the work of Richard Strier, who emerges in the book as the chief representative of the doctrinal approach to Herbert. Despite the fact that some of the engagements usefully clarify significant points of difference, the rehearsal of Strier's remarks about

practically every poem discussed comes to seem predictable, obligatory, and annoyingly intrusive. A beautifully designed and handsomely produced book, the splendid physical appearance of *Prayer and Power* is worthy of a major contribution to Herbert criticism. Its appearance is, however, marred in an extremely minor way by a few lapses in proof-reading, including, alas, one involving the entry of my name in the full and useful index.

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Disseminating Whitman: Revision and Corporeality in Leaves of Grass by Michael Moon. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991. Pp. x + 249. \$32.50.

I first saw Michael Moon *perform* at the 1989 English Institute where, among other things, he sang Roy Orbison's "In Dreams," showed film clips of Kenneth Anger's 1964 *Scorpio Rising* (in which a motorcycle gets lovingly polished and sexy boys put on black leather), and argued that "perverse" desires are central, not peripheral, to much of what we call "high culture."¹ The spectacle of his performance as much as its content excited and empowered me, and I had hoped that his new book, *Disseminating Whitman: Revision and Corporeality in Leaves of Grass* would cross boundaries (say, between literary criticism and autobiography) in similar ways. It doesn't exactly, although the book is still very much worth reading.

In *Disseminating Whitman*, Michael Moon carefully examines the intricate psycho-sexual politics of the first four editions of *Leaves of Grass* in an effort to restore some balance to an Americanist critical tradition that has either hastily identified Walt Whitman as a "gay" writer or prejudicially ignored his homosexuality. Further, Moon elaborates a theory of the relationship between sexuality and textuality, of which *Leaves of Grass* is taken to be the supreme example, whereby the occasional censoring of explicit references to sexuality (to homosexuality in particular) both conceals and enables the text's production of contestatory sexual meaning. Inspired by Whitman's apparently visionary understanding of the way sexuality is infused or "disseminated" throughout U.S. culture, Moon shows how sexuality is likewise disseminated throughout *Leaves of Grass* and how sexuality inhabits strains of that text not commonly thought to have anything to do with it.

He begins with a multifaceted and somewhat paradigmatic analysis of an early, little-known story of Whitman's, "The Child's Champion" (first published in 1841, then subsequently revised) in which a poor, adolescent boy is rescued by a prosperous young man first from a drunken sailor and eventually from the cruel master to whom the boy is apprenticed. Moon shows the intimate relation between this story, in both its original and revised versions, and contemporaneous, homophobic temperance and anti-masturbation discourses, even as the story celebrates in varying degrees of explicitness male homosocial/homosexual bonds. Moon locates much of the text's homoerotic force not only in graphic scenes of drinking, revelling, and brawling, but also in linguistic metaphors of fluidity distributed throughout the text. Addition-

ally, he makes some brief but suggestive connections between "The Child's Champion" and mid-nineteenth century genre paintings of bawdy tavern scenes, showing the complex blending of proscribed and idealized behavior in all of these cultural texts.

Metaphors of fluidity become even more central to the first, 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* and its aqueous Preface, both of which figure masculine identity through a dazzling array of specular doublings and fluid mergings (for example, of the poet and the American landscape). Although the 1855 edition holds great promise, according to Moon, for the versatility and ubiquity of male-male desire in American culture, it failed to find its dreamed-of audience. Consequently, the second, 1856 edition, with its more rigid organizing structures (the poetry now has titles) and its additional, bloodier poems ("Broad-Axe Poem" is one Moon discusses at length), represents an "oedipal crisis" in the career of *Leaves of Grass*. If the first edition demonstrates a "refusal to recognize difference" and the second an "overestim[ation] of its insurmountability" (126), the third, 1860 edition presents something of a compromise in its figuration of what Moon calls "indifference," especially in Whitman's exploration in the "Calamus" poems of men's desire for and ("indifferent") rejection of each other, whereby identity and difference, body and soul, life and death intermingle dynamically. The fourth, 1867 edition, the last that Moon investigates, extends the discourse on homoerotic desire begun most forcefully in the first and third editions, but also, in the wake of the Civil War and Whitman's experiences as an army nurse, powerfully connects that desire with figures of maternity. Throughout *Disseminating Whitman*, Moon strives to show the implication of Whitman's text in historical, political, and sexual questions, all the while looking at Whitman and his age from the defamiliarizing perspective of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

One of the main and most concrete benefits of *Disseminating Whitman* is Michael Moon's critique of the exploitative literary critical tradition attendant on *Leaves of Grass*. He shows how formalist and/or homophobic biases have variously produced distortive, politically conservative interpretations of Whitman's poetry. For example, responding to Henry Nash Smith's and Quentin Anderson's respectively jingoistic and homophobic appraisals of Whitman's notorious catalogue technique, Moon writes,

taken together, the "ideal" (that is, unquestioningly imperialistic) politics that Smith attributes to Whitman and the pathological personal psychology with which Anderson endows him constitute a smoothly functioning "critical" rationale for the practice of taking Whitman's work as an untroubled celebration and justification of the history of American "expansion" while dismissing the poet himself as having been a deficient or inadequate person. (114)

And in one brief passage that nevertheless speaks resonantly about a conceptual trend that has long stifled Americanist literary criticism, Moon rejects comparisons between Whitman's construction of selfhood in the 1860 edition and Emerson's and Thoreau's notions of the transcendent self:

Without wishing to deny that significant connections may well exist among comparable figures in the writings of all three writers, I wish to limit severely the potential interpretive value of such connections for the account I am making here of figures like "the eternal self" in "As I Ebb'd," because I am analyzing the poem and its dominant figures in the specific context of what one might call the internal dynamics of Whitman's own writing. (139)

Although Moon's tight focus on the first four editions of *Leaves of Grass* can itself become distortive in its exclusivity (about which I will have more to say in a moment), *Disseminating Whitman* is refreshingly "separatist" in its refusal to place Whitman in the cliché context of the "great" writers of the American Renaissance (the others are Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville) as if that were, ultimately, his *only* context. If anything, however, Moon could pursue his critique of the critical tradition even further and more systematically.

Disseminating Whitman fairly consistently keeps open lines of dialogue between anti-homophobic and feminist theory to show that Whitman opposed his culture's ever-increasing stigmatization of homosexual bonds as well as its overwhelming paternalism. For example, in his analysis of several "Drum-Taps" poems in which maternal figures are prominent (including figures for Whitman as maternal), Moon counters the classic, Freudian-critical tendency to pathologize Whitman's close bond with his mother by, instead, positively acknowledging "a determinate relation in Whitman's writing between male-homoerotic subject-positions and a conception of maternity as a uniquely powerful albeit liminal state poised on the borderline between life and death" (212). And in a suave reading of the "twenty-eight bathers" section of "Song of Myself," Moon argues that the "twenty-ninth bather" who joins the twenty-eight young men frolicking in the water and the "unseen hand" that "passe[s] over their bodies" can be positively associated not with a reticent Whitman but with the desiring, wealthy, repressed woman watching from behind the blinds of her window: "Alongside the officially prohibited representation of a man feeling, enacting, and fulfilling his desire for other men, Whitman poses the hardly less transgressive representation of a woman doing the same" (45).

Moon even identifies an "instance of something approaching what one might call genuine feminine utterance" (86) in a passage of "The Sleepers" where the poet's mother tells him a story about how, as "a nearly grown girl," she had admired a Native American woman who visited one day. At the same time, he shows how female, black American, and Native American figures, though often "dignified" momentarily as in the above-mentioned passage, are nonetheless excluded from the self-making dynamics of fluidity and specularity typical of the 1855 edition.

But Moon more frequently emphasizes the potentially progressive aspects of Whitman's poetry. For example, what might be seen more coolly as the culturally-endorsed white male egotism that allows Whitman to proclaim "I celebrate myself,/And what I assume you shall assume," nevertheless, according to Moon,

opens up a space in the text which allows for the possibility—although it does not itself enact it—of a woman's, or a black or Native American man's, voicing and/or writing such powerfully repudiatory words as, "I too am untranslatable"—which is to say, the terms of my selfhood (or what you may insist on calling my selfhood, despite my own refusal of the term) are irremediably different from yours. (83)

My disappointment with *Disseminating Whitman* derives from exactly the sanguineness that compells Moon to emphasize the *possibly* liberating capacity of Whitman's self-inflationary rhetoric ("I celebrate myself") instead of its perhaps equally strong power to obliterate genuine otherness ("And what I assume you shall assume"). Consequently, Moon spends too little time troubling over the self-contradictoriness of that rhetoric—just as Whitman himself was famously untroubled by self-contradiction.

Why be so optimistic about Walt Whitman? Moon's generally adulatory response to *Leaves of Grass* flows from his central theoretical assumption that the revisions Whitman carried out over successive editions of the text do not erase homosexuality from the text so much as they "harbor" it:

For any term on the inadmissible range of meanings in Whitman's writing (such as the desirability of males' de-sublimating and de-repressing their erotic pleasure in their own and in each other's bodies), one could readily locate a comparable, "safe" term well within the admissible range ("philanthropic" love between men, "brotherly love," fraternal democracy) in relation to which the "dangerous" or prohibited meaning could be brought into some indeterminate relation, and thereby partly freed from its prohibited status. (14–15)

Moon seems to be describing, among other things, the self-protective, socially enforced, and homophobic mechanisms of the closet, although surprisingly he does not engage with recent theories of the closet's history, structure, and function.²

A test case for Moon's understanding of the "productive" effects of revision in *Leaves of Grass* is Whitman's rendering indeterminate the gender of the landscape to which the poet makes love in the second edition, whereas in the first edition that landscape is unquestionably masculine: the "beautiful masculine Hudson" river of the 1855 Preface becomes in the 1856 "Poem of Many in One" (where many passages of the Preface were interpolated) simply the "Hudson." While Moon rightly suspects that the difference between the two editions may not be that great overall, given the many other places in which the second edition remains homoerotic, and while the phrase "beautiful masculine Hudson" cannot be said to have *no other* meaning than the homoerotic given the many layers of meaning (political, national, economic, formalist, sensory) that *Leaves of Grass* activates at once, nevertheless he goes on to argue that indeterminacy in this case generates a further, salutary sexual meaning.

Since male homosexual desire was understood in Whitman's culture chiefly as pain, punishment, or humiliation—that is, as a form of rape, the degendering of the landscape to which Whitman makes love in the second edition, according to Moon, "opens up the possibility of relations beyond

those of oedipalized male homosexuality" (118). But in what sense can the *erasure* of a reference to male homosexual desire have the apparently opposite effect of "open[ing] up" the text to new meanings "beyond" it, of *increasing* a reader's understanding of the many, non-violent forms that male homosexuality can take? If Whitman ensures that homophobic readers will not *have* to see homosexuality in his text (even while at the same time not preventing anyone from seeing it who won't refuse to do so), then I would argue that his text does *not* contest or subvert the status quo, as Moon argues that it does, but instead reinforces the status quo. Moon does not always convincingly demonstrate how Whitman's self-censorship could "extend throughout the text the broadening of its erotic and sexual-political scope" (119) without making the sexual politics of the text only unclear at best. Neither does he explain how the text was useful then and how it could be used now to transform the attitudes of anti-gay and/or non-gay-identified readers.

A great deal must depend, as Moon notes only in passing (32), on the *reader* of such revised or "censored" passages, and yet he does not incorporate a theory of readership into his theory of the textual dynamics of Whitman's revisions, even though a theory of the potentially liberating effects of revision would seem to require either a theory of reading or a material history of readers' responses. Nor, curiously, does Moon reflect self-consciously on the energies and implications of his *own* reading practices. He does, periodically, anticipate that his use of Freudian and Lacanian paradigms to interpret Whitman could be criticized as being anachronistic by arguing, instead, that he is merely responding to patterns and concerns already amply present in Whitman's text and time. But even if Whitman, intentionally or not, were asking questions parallel to the ones Moon articulates, Moon would need to contextualize those questions in a richer, more theoretically-informed, *historical* setting—and that setting would include the historical, politically-loaded "backward glance," with all of its implication in *contemporary* history, that Moon himself casts on Whitman.

A major consequence of the "critical realism" of Moon's text (a realism that, like fictional realism, conceals or at least marginalizes its own political and historical operations) is that it gives no satisfying account of the politics of Whitman's or Moon's own critical perspective—no account of why Moon cares about Walt Whitman or why anyone today, especially an openly gay man, should care *so much* about Whitman. Regrettably, readers of *Disseminating Whitman* might reasonably conclude that since Whitman's reputation as a major American writer is firmly established, almost any mode of inquiry, including a gay one, can be brought to bear on his work—as if a "gay reading" of Whitman were simply one among many, and one whose time has unproblematically, uncontroversially arrived.

Gay readers have historically approached gay writers, or writers thought to be gay, with much more urgent and specific needs and against greater odds than Moon lets on. In an October 1991 *Rolling Stone* article on the emergence (a deceptively smooth one) of academic lesbian and gay studies, Stacey D'Erasmus writes,

the new discipline resulted from the convergence of the irresistible force of gay activism and scholarship with the sort of movable object of

the academy. [Michael] Moon describes his reaction upon being assigned Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" as an undergraduate: "I had the uncanny experience that Whitman was speaking directly to me. There's this passage that begins, 'It is not upon you alone that dark patches fall.' I was trying to figure out how to come out, but I was also trying to figure out how to think about it." (84)³

D'Erasmus uses Moon's testimony as a kind of "myth of origins" of the discipline, and goes on to chart, roughly, some key figures and events that have brought us to where we are today (but where are we?) in queer studies. The story that Moon told D'Erasmus is the story that I miss in *Disseminating Whitman*—the "story" of what motivates gay people, including Michael Moon, to ask questions and to take risks (as Whitman apparently did), of what makes us feel understood, and of what gives us the agency (that Whitman apparently did *not* have) to make changes in our world. I approach *Disseminating Whitman* as an openly gay graduate student with, perhaps, "too much" need; perhaps I want from *Disseminating Whitman* something like what John Addington Symonds wanted from Whitman's "Calamus" poems (when he implored Whitman to specify whether or not the love between men portrayed in those poems "is calculated to encourage ardent and *physical* intimacies")—some confirmation of who *I* am and of the projects *I* have set out to fulfill, some clearer sense from Michael Moon of where *Disseminating Whitman* fits into the politically, emotionally, and intellectually volatile disciplines that shape it and that, in turn, Moon, along with many others, is now in the midst of shaping.

Columbia University

Patrick Horrigan

Notes

1. D. A. Miller organized a program for the English Institute that year entitled "Gay Men in Criticism"; the speakers included Miller himself, Moon, and Douglas Crimp; a version of Moon's talk/performance now appears as "A Small Boy and Others: Sexual Disorientation in Henry James, Kenneth Anger, and David Lynch" in *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text* (London: Routledge, 1991), edited with an introduction by Hortense J. Spillers.

2. Two examples of this scholarship are Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) and D. A. Miller's "Anal Rope" (which can be found in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, edited by Diana Fuss [London: Routledge, 1991]). Although Sedgwick's theory is grounded in readings of turn-of-the-century texts including Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, it can be usefully applied to Whitman's texts, whose "modernity" has often enough been remarked. In his reading of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), Miller articulates a powerful theory of homosexual meaning, applicable to linguistic texts, as a product of the tension between denotation and connotation.

3. "The Gay Nineties: In Schools Across the Country, Gay Studies Is

Coming On Strong," *Rolling Stone*, October 3, 1991.

Do the Americas Have a Common Literature? Gustavo Pérez Firmat, ed. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990. Pp. ix + 394. \$49.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

With the approach of the Columbian Quincentenary, the rising status of Latin American literature in the international cultural arena, and the current emphasis on multiculturalism in literary studies, the study of literary relations between the Americas now commands a new and growing interest among readers of both North American and Latin American literature. When treated in a comparative context, these literatures have traditionally been studied in relation to their European sources and parallels rather than in relation to each other. Scholars attempting to open the perspectives of their research and teaching to the inter-American context are faced with a series of problems, including the relative lack of previous work in this field and the difficulty of negotiating the historical, political, and cultural differences between and also within the two continents.

This collection of essays on inter-American literary relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries represents an important step towards remedying such problems. Its appearance is especially timely given the current interest in postcolonial literature and theory among scholars of both Anglo-American and Latin American literatures, who usually work in different departments and different buildings as well as different languages, and are all too often unaware of each others' work. Each of the thirteen essays included here explores a particular cultural issue as it is formulated in a specific body of literary texts. Because it presents recent research exemplifying the variety of productive approaches which may be taken to inter-American literary studies, the collection is equally useful to specialists working on the particular problems and texts treated and to scholars wishing to begin a more general investigation of the field. The unity among the essays lies in their attention to questions of cultural identity and images of "Americanness," and in their attention to the hemispheric significance of the cases upon which they focus. Without losing sight of the sharp historical and political divisions between the two American continents, the authors of these essays seek to excavate dialogues and articulate commonalities among the literatures and cultures of both. But they do not conceive of these commonalities as uncomplicated or non-contradictory. Indeed, one of the effects of the volume is to reveal the multiple differences which exist within each continent, and thus to problematize the claims of intra-continental union upon which the bifurcation of North American and Latin American culture partially rests. In sounding complex literary connections among diverse regions of the Americas, these essays trace maps through the often labyrinthine cultural terrain which may link the two continents as surely as it divides them.

In his introduction, Pérez Firmat identifies four approaches adopted in the essays to the question of hemispheric literary connections, emphasizing that each approach is an investigative strategy which may serve differing critical

agendas and ideological orientations. The first of these, the *generic* approach, "attempts to establish a hemispheric context by using as a point of departure a broad, abstract notion of wide applicability" (3). Essays which work primarily from this perspective are Lois Parkinson Zamora's study of the "literary concern with the usable past" (37) in contemporary United States and Latin American fiction, Eduardo González' discussion of racial and cultural miscegenation and displacements in New World texts, José Piedra's examination of neo-African musical language in the North American blues and the Cuban *son*, and David Haberly's study of the legend as a genre in which a national past was created or re-created in nineteenth century North American, Spanish American, and Brazilian texts.

The second, *genetic* approach explores causal connections between authors and texts. Pérez Firmat explains that this approach goes beyond the excavation of sources and influences to the examination of the uses to which a given body of work has been put by later writers and critics. Essays which follow this line of inquiry are Doris Sommer's study of intertextuality in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and James Fenimore Cooper, Enrico Mario Santí's study of Latin American readings and appropriations of Whitman, and John T. Irwin's study of Borges' rewriting (in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius") of Poe's "The Purloined Letter." The third, *appositional* approach involves a focus on non-causal affinities. Here, as Pérez Firmat puts it, "confluence takes precedence over influence" (4)—the implication being that there are indeed Pan-American issues, which writers from different parts of the hemisphere engage in recognizably related ways. Essays belonging to this group are Wendy B. Faris' on the idealization of the land in works by Carpentier and Faulkner, René Prieto's on Severo Sarduy's and Nicole Brossard's affinities with contemporary French theory, and Jonathan Monroe's on race, gender and national identity in Adrienne Rich and Aimé Césaire.

The final, *mediative* approach addresses works which incorporate within themselves the interstitial space created as discrete languages, literatures, and cultures come in contact. Essays written in this mode are José David Saldívar's delineation of an oppositional American discourse from José Martí to Ntozake Shange, Antonio Benítez-Rojo's discussion of the Caribbean as geographical and cultural bridge between North and South America, and Pérez Firmat's own reading of José Lezama Lima's meditation on inter-American identity in *La expresión americana*.

Pérez Firmat's intention in gathering these essays together is to demonstrate the rich diversity of the work which may be done in the inter-American literary field, rather than to develop a theory of Pan-American poetics or to engage in a debate on the question posed in the volume's title. Precisely because of the complexity of the field and the pioneering nature of this collection, in addition to the broad audience the volume assumes, it would have been useful had such a discussion been attempted, perhaps through the inclusion of one or more essays which addressed these issues directly. Essays like Zamora's, which investigates historical consciousness in American fictions in the context of widely influential European theories of history, in fact begin to do so, and the recurrence in many of the essays of such themes as miscegenation, translation, intertextuality, cultural hybridity, and the "newness" of post-Encounter American civilizations suggest some of the

shapes which a formulation of a "Pan-American poetics" might take. But a more general discussion of the theoretical and historical problems involved in the study of New World literatures as a distinct field would still be helpful. It may be that the appearance of this volume will make such an undertaking possible.

In a collection so varied, individual readers will inevitably find some of the essays more ground-breaking than others. Saldívar's, Piedra's, and Monroe's specific attention to the formation of counterhegemonic identities within the multicultural American space is for me more useful than González' rich and provocative, but perhaps too universalizing discussion of racial mixture as it is represented in New World texts. Similarly, I found Haberly's and Sommer's studies of national and Americanist myths more incisive, because more concretely grounded in history, than Pérez Firmat's intelligent, but in my view insufficiently critical reading of Lezama's own myth-making. And Irwin's brilliant Derridean-Lacanian reading of detective fiction in Poe and Borges seems to me marginal to the concerns of the collection in a way that Faris' comparison of Faulkner and Carpentier, centered on the issue of writing the American landscape, does not.

The essays, however, are without exception deeply reflective, well researched, and finely wrought. It is particularly commendable that considerable attention is given to nineteenth century Latin American writing—an important body of work which is not widely known among English-speaking readers. A significant number of the contemporary Latin American authors treated are those most widely translated and distributed; this strategy of selection has the virtue of speaking to the broadest possible audience, but also the disadvantage of leaving major but less commonly taught authors—say, José María Arguedas, Rosario Castellanos, Marta Traba—in the shadows. Gaps like this one, however, can be considered minor in a book intended not as a definitive study but as the opening of a new field. On the whole, *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* is an excellent point of departure for investigation of what the volume reveals to be close, though complex and often conflicted relations among the cultures and literatures of the Americas.

Louisiana State University

Leslie Bary

The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility, Martin Warner, ed. New York: Routledge, 1990. \$55.00 (cloth); \$15.95 (paper;).

In this interdisciplinary collection, philosophers, literary critics, biblical scholars, theologians, and historians of ideas explore from their various perspectives "the ways in which the persuasive (and related literary) procedures of the biblical writers cut across or reinforce their concern with truth." (5) The essays share a conviction that rhetorical criticism helps clarify the complex interrelated issues that arise when the Christian bible is read as literature and as scripture. They do not represent a shared theological stance nor a common philosophical position towards truth claims.

The editor's well-woven introduction lays out the broad understanding of

'rhetoric,' 'biblical writers' and 'truth' operative throughout the work. He also highlights the rich variety of insights by using Paul Ricoeur's distinction between theories and practices of interpretation associated with suspicion and those associated with faith (17). These two hermeneutic orientations enable the authors to deal with discontinuities between text and history and with the multilayered linguistic symbolism particular to biblical texts.

Lynn Poland's essay "The Bible and the Rhetorical Sublime" stands as prologue to the volume. She raises the fundamental question of the source and nature of the Scriptures' "sublimity," that is, its capacity to evoke in at least some readers a sense of what Rudolf Otto referred to as the 'holy.' She focuses on the relation between text and truth by contrasting a "rhetoric of sublimity" and a "poetics of the beautiful" (33). Although the latter has dominated literary criticism since the Romantics, recent developments seek implicitly or explicitly to rediscover the allegorical, to re-insert the gaps collapsed by the romantic notion of poetic symbol. Poland uses Augustine's understanding of allegory and rhetoric to show that the 'mysterium tremendum' of scripture is located in the labour of interpretation (38). She argues that this understanding of allegory, a persisting tradition in the West, briefly eclipsed by the romantic disparagement of it, locates the religious power of texts in the trials of interpretation and in the struggle to reconcile textual obscurity with faith in a transcendent ideal (39). Her insistence upon the importance of language "in its 'lawlessness,'" in "its failures to signify" (46) and her challenge of the Romantic aesthetic provides the occasion for rethinking the nature of figurative language by both religious and literary readers of the Bible.

The section on Old Testament and Apocrypha contains three essays. John Barton's "History and Rhetoric in the Prophets" examines not so much the linguistic features of prophetic discourse as its historical contexts and the political and religious realities motivating the prophets' use of their rhetorical skills. David Cline's "Deconstructing the Book of Job" seeks discordant features in the Wisdom literature to show how the text itself undermines the positions it puts forth on human suffering and divine retribution. In "Biblical Story and the Heroine," Margarita Stocker skillfully uses feminist insights into the cultural construction of gender relations to analyze the Judith narrative as a site of three competing genres: an epic of masculine aggression, a tragedy of masculine fall from power and a romance of feminine power.

The volume's second section focuses on the New Testament. In "History, Truth, and Narrative" Steward Sutherland exposes the unique problems of the relation of history and truth in the Gospel accounts, given the absoluteness of their claim about Jesus. Roger Trigg's "Tales Artfully Spun" further probes the historical vulnerability of the Gospels in light of Plato's understanding of truth as *logos* and *mythos*, an understanding embedded in the New Testament writings themselves. So convinced are the Gospel writers of the historical truth of the events they recount that contemporary readers miss the meaning if they separate form from content and disengage the evangelists' message from their conviction about the truth of their account. Trigg pleads that biblical criticism must include analysis of these truth claims and points to the rhetorical strategy of cross examination frequently used by lawyers as an appropriate means for judging witnesses' testimony and shifting truth from falsehood.

David Jasper considers the double irony of the Gospel of Mark (and the messianic secret) in light of the D. E. Klemm's analysis of tropes in postmodern theological inquiry. Particularly helpful was his distinction of the ways in which the Marcan community, radically seeking cohesion, feared the disruptive power of irony over its own members yet, as a group in formation, discovered its identity in the ironic in-breaking of God concealed and revealed in Jesus. Martin Warner explores "The Fourth Gospel's Art of Rational Persuasion" in terms of its complex narrative structure designed to evoke a belief which is ultimately transformative but also one which is not devoid of intellectual content. His view is elegantly complemented by Michael Edwards's "The World Could Not Contain the Books." Edwards's subtle prose exemplifies the hermeneutics of faith. He argues critically and persuasively that the Prologue is integral to the Johannine text and also that John's is *the* Gospel which unites the others and which, in the scope of its rhetoric, moves without strain "from what we should call literature to what we should call religion" (194). George Kennedy's "'Truth' and 'Rhetoric' in the Pauline Epistles" shifts perspectives and offers a final exercise of suspicion by pointing to the difficulties involved whenever we attempt to adjudicate between personal experience and historical validation.

In the epilogue "The Language of Ecstasy and the Ecstasy of Language," Cyril Barrett's consideration of mystical language as the context of an experience which transcends the immediacy of that experience left this reader disappointed in its conclusion about the negative and absolutely transcendental symbolism of the language of prophecy.

The strength of the collection lies in the interplay of the essays and their illustration of multiple rhetorical strategies. What is missing, from a theological perspective, is reference to the current debates about the multiplicity of voices excluded by the dominance of one kind of rhetoric and the ideology of its use by the Christian community throughout history. The volume is important to those interested in the positive contribution rhetorical criticism makes to biblical studies and to those whose primary concern is its bearing on the scope and limits of textual, form, and redaction criticism. The essays could be profitably used with masters students and with upper level undergraduate majors in literature or religion. Teachers in either field will find a store of information for illuminating familiar texts.

Saint Mary's College

Phyllis H. Kaminski

And the View from the Shore: Literary Traditions of Hawai'i, by Stephen H. Sumida. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991. Pp. xxiii + 330. \$30.00.

If one were told ten or fifteen years ago that a book about the literature of Hawaii had just been published, an understandable reaction might have been: who cares? The fact that such a reaction today to the appearance of *And the View from the Shore: Literary Traditions of Hawai'i* would be rare, that the subject of this text would not automatically be dismissed as obscure or

insignificant, is due in part to the efforts of author Stephen Sumida and others like him to change and broaden the definition of literature.

The book serves two announced pressing needs. First, it stands as the only literary history of Hawaii available and the only one ever attempted other than a doctoral dissertation by Philip Ige (Columbia University, 1968); A. Grove Day's *Books about Hawaii: Fifty Basic Authors*, which presents two-to-three page introductions to each author, is not set up to support and illustrate large-scale historical theses, does not confine itself to literature in a traditional sense, and thus does not cover much of the material in Sumida's volume. Moreover, even within the context of Asian-American literature and criticism, writers from Hawaii have been overshadowed by their counterparts on the continent. In Elaine Kim's *Asian American Literature*, for example, discussion of work by Hawaii writers amounts to less than five percent of the text, and only two writers are treated in any detail. Second, his book is intended as a contribution to an ongoing literary movement. Taking an Arnoldian stance, Sumida asserts that criticism plays an indispensable role in the encouragement and stimulation of more literature. Although he dislikes being called a "promoter" of the literature of Hawaii (267), Sumida has been perhaps its greatest exponent ever since he helped organize the landmark Talk Story Conference of 1978. In part an account of his own efforts to revive Local (Asian/Hawaiian/European multicultural) literature, his study aims to legitimize a body of writing by showing how it can be a proper object of critical attention.

To a large extent he has succeeded in these tasks because the reader will come away from his book wanting to read or re-read the works discussed. *And the View from the Shore* consists in the main of readings of material from three traditions: native Hawaiian, Tourist, and Local. One tradition which Sumida deliberately sets aside is the Colonial (missionary narratives) because he prefers to highlight the very different plantation experience of Asian immigrants and of Asian-Americans. Native Hawaiian literature is represented by several examples of *mele* (songs or lyrics), including the well known "Aloha Oe." Sumida reveals that these songs have several layers of meaning, sometimes sexual or politically subversive, which would be unnoticed by outsiders. The Tourist tradition refers to those many works about the islands produced by visitors; the ones covered are Melville's *Typee*, fragments of a projected novel by Twain, and James Michener's *Hawaii*. By far the largest portion of the book is devoted to Local literature. "Local" usually means non-*haole* (non-Caucasian), i.e., native Hawaiian or Asian-American, but Sumida wants to use the term not as a racial classification, but as a cultural one referring to participation in the distinctive multicultural traditions and language of the area. Thus, works of Local fiction which receive extended readings include *The Return of Lono* by O. A. Bushnell (of European descent) as well as *Waimea Summer* by the *hapa haole* (part-Caucasian, part-Hawaiian) author John Dominis Holt and *All I Asking for Is My Body* by Milton Murayama. I should emphasize here that while many other authors and works are more briefly discussed, by no means is Sumida aiming for comprehensiveness. In fact, all of the literature worthy of criticism could not be covered in a book of this size. In addition, Sumida's study is shaped by thematic concerns which may be more easily illustrated in fiction than in poetry or drama. One might

wish that he had said more about the plays of Edward Sakamoto or the poetry of Cathy Song, however his is not an inclusive literary history but an examination of a body of work from a particular point of view.

Sumida organizes Hawaiian literature into the pastoral and the heroic. The former category has provided the images and associations that have made Hawaii into the "paradise of the Pacific," a conception that has dominated from Captain Cook to hi-tech commercial tourism. The latter category opposes the stereotypical conventions of the former by emphasizing the active and dynamic aspects of Hawaii instead of its passive and idyllic ones. Only by recognizing the literature's heroic as well as its pastoral qualities can we overcome the temptation to exoticism. The central rationale of Sumida's book is to provide an alternative to this exoticism, to the tourist's or anthropologist's view of simple, primitive people. The dominant perspective on Hawaii has been, metaphorically speaking, from the deck of Captain Cook's ship, but "what of the view from the shore?" (11). How do native Hawaiian and other Local writers describe and understand themselves and their cultures? As a Local person himself, Sumida presumes to speak for those voices on the shore. When we do hear them, we find that their concerns are not very different from our own. Time and again Sumida breaks down the "civilized people" vs. "savage and primitive others" (19) conceptual framework within which encounters with non-Western peoples have been placed. For example, an historical event of mythic proportions, the "discovery" of Hawaii by Captain Cook and his subsequent death at the hands of its inhabitants, seems to be a pristine case of civilized/primitive interaction, in which natives are completely uncontaminated by any contact with the West and, as a clear indication of their naivete, mistake Cook for the god Lono. In fact, as the reading of Bushnell's novel and of native Hawaiian narratives makes clear, the Hawaiians had already encountered *haole* men, perhaps the Spanish or castaways, and thus recognized the British as men, not gods. The attribution of divinity to Cook is explained as part of a power struggle between the priesthood and the warrior class. Sumida's point is that Hawaii isn't a Paradise stuck in an ahistorical time scheme, but is subject to the same political and economic considerations, the same rational calculations to obtain and maintain power, that animate Western societies. Similarly, in his convincing and novel reinterpretation of Murayama's work, Sumida explains how the authoritarianism of Japanese values, particularly an oppressive sense of filial piety, does not mean the triumph of American values and the necessity of assimilation. This is because the kind of filial piety demanded isn't traditionally Japanese at all; rather, the family reinvented its heritage under the economic duress of the plantation system.

The main weakness of *And the View from the Shore* is its relative lack of interest in theoretical issues. By theory, I mean not only the Continental variety (Deleuze and Guattari and Bakhtin), but also the homegrown sort produced by critics in a position similar to Sumida's. References in this book to Toni Morrison and Leslie Silko indicate an awareness of the possibilities for generalization, and indeed in his recent classroom work he is engaging ethnic literatures in general. An example of the kind of theoretical issue I have in mind is the question of "double-consciousness": what happens when an ethnic writer tries to address both his or her own group and a mainstream audience?

Why have some Asian-American writers on the North American continent achieved mainstream recognition while none from Hawaii has? Does the distinctive pidgin, creole, or dialect of Local speakers make their literature more or less attractive to non-speakers? What of Sumida's own consciousness? How does he understand his own dual role as local informant on the shore as well as anthropologist, a practitioner of Western critical methodology and a user of the language of academic discourse? Nevertheless, his book makes an important contribution to the ongoing project of diversifying our national literature by including hitherto inaudible, forgotten, or suppressed voices.

Honolulu, Hawaii

Elton Fukumoto