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The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History by Leo Braudy. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. Pp. xiii + 649. $27.50.

In the introduction to this monumental, historical study of the changing meanings of fame in Western culture, Leo Braudy describes how the book grew out of his own self-conscious "impulses toward achievement" and from the peculiar experience (when his ex-wife wrote a book about the break-up of their marriage) of being a not altogether unwilling "character in someone else's scenario," "a tiny element in [the] vast operation of modern fame" (pp. 11–12). Thus alerted to the complexities of "go[ing] public," of simultaneously desiring recognition and being "entrapped by the gaze of others, . . . reduced by their definitions, and . . . forced into shapes unforeseen in the innocent aspirations to the golden world of fame" (p. 12), Braudy sought to understand and so to free himself from the effects of his own experience by "collecting examples of the baroquely warping effect the pursuit of fame was having on individual lives in the present, while examining the history of fame in the past" (p. 12).

For Braudy, "the concept of fame . . . sits at the crossroads . . . where personal psychology, social context, and historical tradition meet. . . . knowing the historical roots of what otherwise can seem to be purely personal urges is the first step to surmounting them" (p. 16). *The Frenzy of Renown* is the product of this effort to know and surmount. Despite its wide-ranging literary, historical, and sociological scholarship, the book is distinctively personal throughout in Braudy's choice of famous people, events, institutions, and works of art to discuss; his informal and informative, often witty style; and the psychological assumptions and theory of human nature that underpins his historical survey.

Braudy considers "ambition and the desire for fame" to be "the prime social emotions" (p. 16); he emphasizes that, like other emotions, they are not simply natural and innate but socially and historically conditioned. His aim is to trace "the effect of historical change" on these "social emotions" to "understand what is general in the history of individual nature in Western culture by observing those examples who tried to stand out on their own and those who stand out for our eyes as well" (pp. 16, 17). Unfortunately, his readings of specific personalities, works, and careers rarely refer back to these introductory theoretical assumptions; as a result, the book becomes more a chronological survey than the thematically organized, psychologically grounded project announced in the Introduction.

This is clear from the five main sections into which *The Frenzy of Renown* is divided. The first considers fame as the effort to be unique and unprecedented; it begins with a brief discussion of Charles A. Lindbergh and Ernest Hemingway as paradigmatic figures, then moves back to Alexander the Great, whom Braudy considers the "first famous person"—the first to try deliberately to be known for himself rather than for his family, his social role, or even his achievements. The second section treats Rome as a "society animated by the urge for fame" earned through public behavior and achievements, while the third discusses certain artistic and spiritual responses and

challenges to Roman military and political values, notably by Christianity, which privileged private attitudes and behavior. The fourth section explores the tendency since the Renaissance for artists, writers, and sages to mediate between public and private activities and to determine who and what is famous. The final section traces the evolution of fame in the past few centuries, its "democratization" and availability to increased numbers and kinds of people. In all five sections Braudy is well attuned to how changes in the nature and control of technology and communications affect who and what become famous. He is also excellent on how performers, especially actors and artists, both reflect and shape individual and mass modes of self-presentation; how political and other "natural performers" exploit and fall victim to theatrical conventions and techniques in the quest for power and fame.

Inevitably, a book that covers as much ground as *The Frenzy of Renown* will be stronger on some periods, texts, and personalities than on others. Braudy's interpretations seem more perceptive and convincing in Sections 4 and 5 than when he discusses the ancient and medieval periods, and he writes with particular authority on English and American figures of the past three centuries. Given the variety and complexity of fame and its pursuit in the period of "democratization," which merit fuller discussion than they receive, perhaps he should have shortened his treatment of classical antiquity or even begun with the Renaissance, after a brief summary of earlier phenomena, thus leaving room for more on recent centuries. While there are perceptive discussions in Section 2 of such political figures as Pompey the Great, Cicero, and Antony, and of "the authority of Augustus," Braudy's remarks on the Augustan poets sometimes seem rather one-dimensional. For example, he refers to Vergil and Horace as "look[ing] fondly on Augustus's golden order" (p. 135) and treats them basically as apologists for his *auctoritas*. Although he recognizes that Vergil "dramatiz[es] with sympathy what has to be left behind when destiny calls," he nevertheless describes him as "explicitly and no doubt sincerely committed to Augustan values" (p. 128) and sees the *Aeneid* as "a symbolic biography of the subduing of self to the state that is an essential part of Augustus's political and legislative message" (p. 123). He reads the account of *Fama* in *Aeneid* 4.173–95 as a description of a "vulgar" or "frenzied fame," in contrast to the good *fama* that the poem celebrates: the *fama* "which the gods control, the poets dispense, and men ought to strive for"—"the *fama* of (Augustus) Caesar 'that ends only in the stars' (I, 287), the *fama* of becoming like Aeneas, 'known by fame in the heavens above' (I, 379)" (p. 125). This is true as far as it goes, but it seems weighted on the wrong side of the moral scale. It oversimplifies the *Aeneid*'s complex vision of the cruelty and costs of its hero's achievements and obedience to the gods and destiny (though it prepares the way nicely for Braudy's more persuasive interpretation of Ovidian poetry, in contrast to that of Vergil and Horace, as subverting Augustan "political fame" and establishing "a coherent and competitive set of [private] values" (p. 135). Here he might also have referred to the elegies of Propertius and other poetry of the age in which the contrast between the private and the political is a recurrent theme, a theme which, as he recognizes, prepared the way for the Christian challenge to traditional Roman, public values.

Braudy's treatment of the Roman poets illustrates one pervasive methodo-

logical problem of his book: the tendency to interpret literary texts biographically and psychologically in terms of the urges and attitudes of their authors toward various kinds of fame. Another problem has to do with the chronological progression of the five sections I have described. Although, as I have said, he claims that the true organization of the book is thematic, the movement of the successive sections from the Greeks to the present creates a misleading sense of undirectional change. For instance, Braudy traces in the Augustan period and especially the Renaissance the development of the notion that the writer, by his power to depict, praise, or blame the achievements and failures of real and fictional persons, can determine and dispense fame. But this association between doer, author, and fame is present from the beginning of the Western literary tradition: the Homeric Greek word for fame or glory, *kleos*, means etymologically "that which is heard" (from *kluo*, "hear"; cf. the derivation of *fama* from *fari*, "to say"); in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, *kleos* designates both the imperishable fame attained by heroes through poetry when they have performed great deeds and the medium of poetry when it serves the function of glorifying these heroic deeds. When Alexander the Great, as Braudy recounts, claimed to envy Achilles, on whom he modeled himself, he did so because, he said, Achilles had Homer to make him famous. Alexander's career of self-promotion can be seen as in part a response to the lack of a contemporary poet and poetic medium of fame equal to his own *klea*, his famous deeds.

In composing *The Frenzy of Renown*, Braudy has drawn productively on an enormous range of primary sources and relevant scholarship. (His bibliographical references run to 25 large pages.) He occasionally gets a detail wrong (Odysseus didn't steal the Sun's cattle, p. 45) or mistranslates a phrase (*mobile vulgus* means "the fickle common people," not "the common people on the move," p. 489). But such slips are few and far between, and it is no accident that I have found them mostly in my own area of specialization, classical literature. This is a common and rather parochial response of specialist readers to works that cross normal disciplinary boundaries (one thinks of Auerbach's *Mimesis* or Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*); it does not constitute a fundamental criticism of Braudy's book, let alone weaken or invalidate its ideas and interpretations.

In conclusion, let me say that *The Frenzy of Renown* is enjoyable to read. Despite lapses in style and diction and occasional prolixity, there are surprisingly few *longueurs* for so big a work. By the end, I felt that I had been informatively led by a witty, congenial teacher through a sophisticated and stimulating Western civilization course successfully organized around the theme of fame. *The Frenzy of Renown* is neither a work of basic scholarship nor a definitive documentation of the history of fame. Rather, it is a psychologically acute, imaginative synthesis that succeeds in its stated aim of "map[ping] the major routes and important byways of this constant theme in the history of Western society" (p. vii). It will send readers back to familiar authors, texts, and historical personalities with a fresh interpretive perspective, while introducing them to new figures who will repay study. It may even achieve Braudy's goal of helping to free them from the imprisoning effects of their own desires for fame.

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Order from Confusion Sprung: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature from Swift to Cowper by Claude Rawson. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985. Pp. 431. $35.00.

Literature and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century England by Pat Rogers. Totowa, N.J. : Barnes & Noble, 1985. Pp. 215. $28.50.

Eighteenth-Century Encounters: Studies in Literature and Society in the Age of Walpole by Pat Rogers. Totowa, N.J. : Barnes & Noble, 1985. $28.50.

Although he is a professor of English, Claude Rawson is a working critic, a visibly active reviewer and public lecturer who seeks in his work to occupy the ground, largely deserted in America where he now teaches, between academic specialization and middle-brow journalism, between the self-satisfied narrowness and rebarbative jargon of contemporary scholarship and criticism and the moral platitudes and intellectual nullities of the daily book reviewers. Rawson writes about literature, in other words, with full seriousness but without mystifying it or denigrating its moral and intellectual coherence to promote his own cleverness. What this book insists upon is that the eighteenth-century authors who are Rawson's main subject can be as immediately interesting and complex as other writers. They need, he shows, to be talked about as part of a living tradition, as historically distinct but also vitally linked to subsequent writers. Swift and Conrad, T. S. Eliot and Pope, to cite some recurring combinations, are for him mutually illuminating pairs, and some of the best moments in this volume of collected reviews and lectures deal with those interactions across the centuries.

Such continuities may seem, at first glance, unremarkable, but in the context of eighteenth-century historical scholarship as traditionally practiced, Rawson's essays have a striking originality and even a polemical insistence. The book is given a measure of unity by that insistence, which becomes overt and especially specific in the last essay, a long review of Martin Battestin's *The Providence of Wit* (1975). Battestin's hugely learned book, as Rawson sees it, is symptomatic of a misguided, undiscriminating scholarship, governed by a totalizing and static historicism that reads "the history of ideas too literally, without a sufficiently sensitive regard for matters of tone and conviction, of the status of individual items of evidence, and of the relation of literary distinction to that status" (p. 390). For Rawson, literature is more than the expression of an historical moment, and historical moments are themselves made too complex by the force of individual literary talent to be simply defined by certain ruling ideas. That is to say, Rawson is too discriminating and insightful a reader to accept the unifying schemes of scholarship that implicitly prefers controlling entities like history and the great chain of being to the unique signatures of individual writers. Rawson is a refreshing critic with a distinctive voice precisely because he disdains any sort of ideological simplification that denies or even unduly restricts the power of what he without embarrassment celebrates as individual imagination. In preferring the author and the text as he produces it to larger, supposedly determining and impersonal forces, Rawson articulates a welcome skepticism and critical empiricism that extend beyond traditional historicism to more recent totalizing schemes.

As Rawson sees it, for example, Swift can only be diminished and distorted by scholars who insist "on the ideological coherence of his beliefs and the supposed orderly arrangement of his compositions" (p. 147). Rawson's Swift lies somehow "beyond ideology or form," in those elusive ironies and "aggressive mimicries of disorder" that reveal a special "style of feeling and thought" (pp. 147–48). Rawson's insistence on the compelling particularity and inconsistency of Swiftian satire is provoked by what he sees as the complacency of academic explainers who extract an official purpose from his works and "ignore the peculiar energies of Swift's manner" (p. 177). Even Pope's *Essay on Man,* he insists, deserves to be read not for its rehearsal of philosophical and theological issues but for the pleasures of poetic articulation. Its "central poetic excitement resides," he argues, "in Pope's delight in the creation or staging" of systems and not in "any active literal belief in Great Chains of Being or other such articles of pseudo-faith" (p. 224).

This is not to say that Rawson is in any sense an a-historical popularizer. The Pope and Swift he evokes are completely convincing, verifiable for anybody who cares to read their letters or who attends to the specific tonalities of their works. Some of Rawson's best pages are, in fact, exercises in rigorous historical correction of conventional pieties. He insists, for example, that Swift's was not a humane modern sensibility, and that *A Modest Proposal* is grounded in his intense hostility to the pauperized Irish masses. That famous pamphlet is a "complicated interplay of compassion and contempt," an "explosive mixture" rather than a mellow "product of the liberal imagination" (p. 128).

Historically rigorous yet not an historicist, attuned to textual nuances and self-reflexive paradoxes yet not a theorist or deconstructionist, Rawson strikes me as in many ways exemplary, immensely readable and informative, judicious and humane in the face of what he clearly sees as an increasingly dehumanizing, murderously abstract scholarship and criticism. These essays constitute, moreover, an admirable introduction to the British eighteenth century, a series of incisive lectures on the central authors, topics, and problems of the period. The discussion of Pope's *Essay on Man,* for example, is the single best introduction to that notoriously misunderstood poem that I've ever read. It was originally a radio lecture for the Open University, and it illustrates in its persuasive lucidity Rawson's eminence not just as an academic specialist but as a teacher in the best sense. Specialists, however, may find his arguments familiar as well as convincing. Some of these pieces are over ten years old and have already had considerable influence. As (mostly) collected reviews, these essays exhibit a few of the limitations of such occasions: the argument is sometimes loosely-strung, even rambling, and in the various Swift pieces a bit repetitive.

To my mind, the most valuable pages in the book come from an original essay, "Dialogue and Authorial Presence in Fielding's Novels and Plays," which precisely traces connections between the art of the comic novelist and the raucous life of popular entertainments in mid-eighteenth-century London. Rawson achieves a delicate balance in this essay. His finely tuned critical ear for tone and the specific workings of a text enables him to practice an especially convincing brand of literary *cum* social history that places Fielding as an "aristocratic" author who "prefers the demotic freedoms of the frankly

'low' to the pseudo-gentilities of the middle ranks" (p. 282). Memorable and hilariously revealing is his commentary here on Squire Western's precisely timed fart in an argument with his sister, Mrs. Di Western, a feat as Rawson points out that evokes "crude popular entertainments (farces at the London fairs, puppet-shows, and the like)" (p. 282). The effect is to identify an important part of Fielding's special tonality with a convincing exactness of historical detail, to locate the book quite precisely in a "slapstick world" that "is neither the real world nor that of the quasi-fictional medium to which *Tom Jones* ostensibly claims to belong" (p. 283).

In thus restoring the now forgotten or misunderstood contexts of a writer like Fielding, Rawson has much in common with Pat Rogers, whose two books are also collections of his essays over the last fifteen years or so. Rogers is rather more focused on particulars than the free-wheeling Rawson, however, and these pieces expertly describe with a sometimes Hogarthian wealth of detail the social and historical contexts of the early Hanoverian period, especially the unprecedented metropolitan London scene. Rogers seeks to trace as he puts it in the preface to *Eighteenth-Century Encounters* "the commerce between life and art" by examining the "artistic response of major writers" (p. ix) to the events of the early eighteenth century. Both of these books will give the reader more than fair value for money. They are literally bursting with facts and figures surrounding the crucial political events and socio-cultural developments of those years—the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty in the face of Jacobite threats, the uproar surrounding the South Sea Bubble, the rise and political dominance of Walpole, the emergence of popular journalism and the beginnings of mass-market publication, and various phenomena connected with the commercialization of entertainment and leisure.

The guiding purpose in all this, Rogers says, is to contextualize the works of the major eighteenth-century writers more specifically and rigorously than they have been, and in some instances to change our view of their origins and even of their nature. For example, in *Eighteenth-Century Encounters*, Rogers insists with some force that what has always been taken in Book III of *Gulliver's Travels* as a generalized satire of the scientific program associated with the Royal Society was in fact provoked by various engineering schemes generated in the economic excitement surrounding the South Sea Company. Rogers does not claim that Swift is alluding to those schemes but rather that these projects were exactly contemporaneous with the writing of Swift's book and represent "the matrix of ideas within which Swift worked" (p. 23). Gulliver's "Southern Journey" belongs to the early 1720s and resembles the "doings of speculators, engineers, inventors, and company promoters" (p. 25) during those tumultous years. *Gulliver's Travels*, Rogers wants us to remember, "derives" from Swift's responses to that contemporary life rather than to generalized ethical or philosophical problems. As revealing as this approach can be, there are moments when it tends to reduce an author's moral vision and aesthetic force. Thus, Rogers insists rather too much on a narrow historical context when he finds that as Defoe wrote *A Journal of the Plague Year* in 1721, the "deeper imaginative currents" of the book had to be tied in his mind to what he saw as another approaching national disaster (p. 164). So the plague Defoe describes becomes almost an allegory of the coming South

Sea Bubble, and the *Journal* "must operate as a damning indictment of the South Sea scheme: the parallel can work no other way" (p. 165). The force of Rogers' scholarship may lead readers to accept this assertion, but they will want in practice to ignore such origins, since they only trivialize Defoe's powerful book.

In similar but more convincing fashion, other key works of the period, as Rogers puts it, are "dense with historical resonance" and the point of revivifying those topical references is "to provide a better acoustic for early Hanoverian England" (p. x). By and large, he does just that, and these books are literary rather than social history, much more than simply the extended annotations of texts or contributions to a more precise historical background that individual essays appear to be. Gathered together, Rogers' articles articulate very coherently a revisionist emphasis in literary history that charts an interpenetration rather than a simple opposition of the elite literary culture of the high Augustans like Swift and Pope and the world of an emerging popular and specifically modern culture. Rogers' work, in other words, complicates the historical and cultural context so that writing like Pope's and Swift's appears as something other than a rehearsal of those great moral and philosophical ideas that some scholars like to extract from works worthy of being called literature. "The iron necessities of art are wrought from the evanescent contingencies of topical circumstances" (p. 82, *Literature and Popular Culture*) is Rogers' slightly melodramatic way of summing up the Scriblerian relationship to their world. Such a summary, in fact, is untrue to the drift of Rogers' explications, which bear out what critics like W. K. Wimsatt said forty years ago, that the art of Swift and Pope begins in playful subversion. They drew their vigor, most critics would now say, not from the values of reason and good sense they espoused but from what they saw as the disorder and folly all around them. Rogers' books affirm that now standard reading with a revealing and original particularity. Over and over again, his explorations provide concrete evidence for Rawson's guiding suspicion that eighteenth-century writing is distorted by the generalizing schemas of the history of ideas or the neat patterns of formalistic criticism.

University of Pennsylvania John Richetti

The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies by Helena Michie. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Pp. 179. $16.95.

At the heart of Helena Michie's *The Flesh Made Word* are two pictures which must resonate culturally for all her readers, and which suggest both the range and the limitations of her work. The first image is of herself, as a young child, staring at effigies of madonnas and portraits of beautiful women, being prepared for a lifetime of reading what she calls "heroine description" (p. 84). The second is her own metaphor of these descriptions as the equivalent of the *Playboy* centerfold, in which the "vital statistics" stand both next to and in the place of the woman's photograph, signalling to the tantalized reader what to read for (what is "vital") and "construct[ing] an im-

aginary body," "leav[ing] gaps for the production of sexual fantasy" (p. 97). It is the failure of description—the failure of "language to represent"—that concerns Michie in this book, the absence of women's bodies in the Victorian literature obsessed with the female "figure" that she is trying to explain. But her real concern is with our (contemporary) reading and re-writing of the Victorian woman's (literary) body: what *The Flesh Made Word* offers finally is not a coherent account of the obsessions and visions of nineteenth-century English writers, but the re-readings contemporary women are performing on the conventions of Victorian representation.

Michie is engaged with a series of images of Victorian femininity, and in chapters ranging from questions of hunger, of labor, of prostitution, of metaphor, she attempts to account for what she argues is an absence at the heart of description: the absence elsewhere filled with sexuality, with movement, with passion, with all that she argues must be left out of literary depiction. The strongest appeal of Michie's work is the variety of sources she has amassed: rather than centering her discussions on a few literary works or one brief literary epoch, she moves from etiquette manuals to Dante Gabriel Rossetti; from the novels of Anne Bronte to Mary Cowden Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines;* from Henry Mayhew to Florence Nightingale. No reader could leave this book unconvinced that the problem of imagining the female body existed in all forms of Victorian writing.

But this is not essentially a book about Victorian literature; Michie's real engagement is with the traces of Victorian culture, and our reassessment of them. Her image for her book is a series of mirrors, reflections of female imaging, mirrors which will not create a unified picture of the Victorian imagination, and which will be productively displaced and shattered by her concluding discussion of contemporary female poets. The strength of this hall of mirrors is its understanding of the Victorianism we have inherited; as a discussion of Victorian literature, this book fails on several counts.

Michie's statement of purpose makes clear the self-imposed limits of her project:

> My emphasis is not so much on whether a particular depiction of a heroine is "full," "physical," or "sexual," as on the erotic and empowering interplay of sexual possibility with its absence. This means that I pay relatively little attention to whether a particular author is male or female, a work "feminist" or "anti-feminist." Although there is much room for valuable work on the specific historical situation of representation, the focus here is on opening up texts to movement and surprise. (p. 11)

Leaving aside for the moment "movement and surprise," Michie's disclaimer means not only that she is, as she makes clear, not interested in authorial intention, but that she is pushing together materials that reflect quite different historical and social tensions, and calling them all "Victorian," asking of them all the same questions, without any concern for contextual precision. This essentially reader-centered approach (reading for "surprise") leaves serious gaps in her account. To choose only the most superficial example, fashion was hardly static over the seventy years of Victoria's reign: how much

less so were female labor, prostitution, pictorial convention. But no mention of changes in factory reports, of the Contagious Diseases Acts, of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, sullies the odd aestheticism of this book: Michie's women, more than those of Eliot, Gaskell, Trollope, et al., seem not to be "fleshed out."

The other thinness of this book is its oddly naive relationship to representation: for all that it claims, on several occasions, to know that full representation is not possible, its insistent indictment of the "synechdochal" nature of Victorian description implies that other, more fully realized depictions could be achieved, were achieved, in other ages. From at least Steven Marcus on, everyone has known that Victorians (Other and otherwise) were foot fetishists; any reader of Dickens must recognize the heroine's presence in the mention of her dimpled hand, her tiny waist. But what other model of representation would Michie propose? How could one get "more" of a heroine into prose—short of actually interjecting the *Playboy* centerfold, perhaps without its staples, into the centers of these novels? Michie, like Margaret Homans, seems to connect women with the "literal" over the "figurative," to praise language that gets the "body" in, but she never suggests a language that is without metaphor, or that contains "live" metaphors to oppose the "dead metaphors" she wants to expose. Of *Adam Bede*'s metaphors she remarks, "the sensuous vehicle of metaphor overwhelms the body it is meant to describe; language reproduces language as Hetty reproduces and murders a child" (p. 95). But to argue in this way is to introduce an hysteria of critical language. Dead metaphors are not "murderous" in the way that Hetty is; further, many of Michie's examples of deadly metaphors that displace the representation of the female body for something else turn on a more general nineteenth-century problematic of beauty and truth inherited from the Romantics, complicated by Ruskin, and put into question by Pater and Wilde. While not without gender implications, they are hardly limited to the containment of female sexuality or the repression of female labor.

Further, they are not limited to "heroine" description. Take this depiction of the body, synedoche, self-abuse, and all:

> Within the first week of my passion, I bought four sumptuous waistcoats, . . . and took to wearing straw-coloured kid gloves in the streets, and laid the foundations of all the corns I have ever had. If the boots I wore at that period could only be produced and compared with the natural size of my feet, they would show what the state of my heart was, in a most affecting manner.

This "heroine," with swollen feet and sumptuous clothes, earnestly dressing the part of the passionate lover, is of course David Copperfield, who wore those waistcoats "not for myself . . . for Dora." Michie's inability to see beyond the obvious gender implications of her argument—perhaps a product of her uncritical use of a Lacanian division of metaphorical labor—leads her to ignore the most interesting elements of Victorian fiction: its blurring of gender boundaries, its subversion of readers' expectations, its sense of the impenetrability, the hidden violence, of all male/female relations.

But this book, despite the fact that it draws its primary evidence (and four

of its five chapters) from Victorian literature, does not seem to grow out of a real scholarly engagement with that literature. There is a scandalous degree of sloppiness in its references to novels: Alice Madden, of *The Odd Women,* becomes Agnes; Roger Hamley, of *Wives and Daughters,* Robert. Michie states, incorrectly, that Mary Barton is never shown at work as a dressmaker; she claims that Jane Eyre teaches only one lesson to Adele, ignoring Jane's difficult, and much praised, lessons with the children of workers when she lives at Moor House. Where necessary, she misreads passages to make her own point stronger: Rose, in *Eight Cousins,* does, as Michie states, refuse to loosen a belt for fear that her waist will grow bigger, but eventually, under her uncle's tutelage and with the narrator's clear approval, she throws away all her constricting clothes, and begins to dress for comfort and freedom of movement. While quoting *The Diary of a Greedy Woman* (1896) which argues that a "woman is *lovely* in the act of eating," Michie claims that "the language of this defense of women's hunger . . . suggests the lengths to which nineteenth-century culture was willing to go to deny women's physical need for food" (p. 17). Would it not be more productive, from a feminist standpoint, to read in the passage a conflict of voices discussing food, fasting and the fall; to say that in 1896, it was possible for a woman writer to describe a woman taking pleasure in food. The "nineteenth-century culture" which Michie villifies did contain possibilities for resistance.

But Michie resists seeing both Victorian culture and literature as less than monolithic, for much the same reason that she wants to believe Jane Eyre and Mary Barton do not really work; that she ignores the class- and gender-consciousness of the women who mobilized against the Contagious Diseases Acts; that she wants to believe that language, in *Adam Bede,* kills; that she wants to believe more perfect forms of representation are available. This book is profoundly teleological, and its heroes are the feminist poets of our day, who rewrite the Victorian myths, who shatter the mirrors Michie has created in the rest of her book. Perhaps for this reason, she does not discuss novels like Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman,* which have a more ambivalent, less defiantly angry, relationship to Victorian fiction. Atwood's satiric, fantastic novel begins with a recipe for puff pastry; her heroine is a disillusioned English major; three of the novel's characters are graduate students in English, one writing a monograph on womb symbols in Beatrix Potter and contemplating an essay on *Alice in Wonderland* and the rejection of maternity. The novel ends with the heroine baking a cake-version of herself, and then serving herself to various men, one of whom, in the last scene, cheerfully eats her, as she sits

> watching the cake disappear, the smiling pink mouth first, then the nose and then one eye. For a moment there was nothing left of the face but the last green eye; then it too vanished, like a wink. He started devouring the hair.

These are the terms of Michie's "descriptions," but in Atwood's recognition of the "wink" of the vanishing heroine, we see something different from the perpetual frown of Michie's critique. *The Flesh Made Word* has an argument to make, about the contemporary scene and the literary inheritance left by

those "mythologizing" Victorian novelists, but it often promises a false utopianism of depiction, and indicts its subject unnecessarily harshly. As her own opening image suggests, the pictures in our minds of the female body come from many galleries; no less a "Victorian" than Robert Browning, in "My Last Duchess," suggested the dangers of preferring women "painted on the wall, . . . as if . . . alive." Michie's preoccupations have led her to make of the Victorian Wing of that museum a more dead—and more deadening—place than it was, or is, for responsive readers. As the boyfriend remarks in *The Edible Woman* after eating the woman-cake, "Thank you . . . It was delicious." If, as Michie herself claims, we always know bodies "in pieces," we must recognize that we as readers (seeking pleasure and complexity, "movement and surprise") continue to devour them, not having any other way by which to take them in.

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The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture by Marjorie Perloff. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. Pp. xxiii + 288. $24.95.

One reason perhaps why the work of Bakhtin is popular with American critics is that it is one of the best statements of the goals of scholarship today —a synthesis of formalist close reading with a socio-historical point of view. Marjorie Perloff's study does not cite Bakhtin but it does display the virtues of a formalist/historical synthesis. The organizing strategy is to ground the study first in the period just preceding the First World War, the brief utopian moment of Futurism when the artists responded affirmatively to the challenges of the industrialized urban landscape. This grounding allows Perloff to state with some precision the implications for contemporary cultural studies of the revival of interest in Futurism among postmodern artists and theorists such as Laurie Anderson and Jacques Derrida. *The Futurist Moment,* then, is historiography at its best, focusing our attention on the earlier moment not for its own sake as information but in order to help us understand the contemporary moment as represented in such figures as Roland Barthes and Robert Smithson.

Part of the value of the study, producing an effect at once theoretical and aesthetic, has to do with its synecdochic style of thought. Indeed, the book is worth reading regardless of one's area of specialization in order to learn this organizing strategy, which is to discuss in detail a specific text, such as Blaise Cendrars' *La Prose du Transsiberien,* and then by a careful association of its formal features with the historical setting to derive explanatory principles extendable to the entire era. As in the case of the reading effect of allegory, in which the more the author insists on the concrete detail the more the reader experiences an appeal to an abstract dimension of meaning, Perloff's style evokes a theoretical understanding out of a series of detailed comparative discussions of just a few well-chosen examples.

Perloff's ability to evoke theoretical generalization more by means of alle-

gory than by allegoresis is due in part to the aesthetic impact of her arrangement—for example the way the final chapter links up with the first in a comparison of the readings of the Eiffel Tower given by Cendrars and Roland Barthes. Such symmetries take on explanatory power by being the vehicles for a precise definition of "the language of rupture," as manifested in three different experimental dimensions: the collage form, the genre of the manifesto, and the medium of the "artist's book."

Part of the unity of the study, joining the present moment with the past, comes from Perloff's attention to the continuing vitality of these innovations. At the same time, the juxtaposition of close readings of representative works from different national movements—Italian, Russian, French, British—allows a full accounting of the particular differences distinguishing the varieties of Futurism that evolved relative to the specific historical circumstances in each case. This juxtaposition also provides a fresh perspective on the continuing debate concerning the relationship of aesthetics to politics. Perloff takes issue with Fredric Jameson (and through him to some extent also with Walter Benjamin) who too readily assumes that an aesthetics of politics is inherently fascist: "For while it is a truism that the Marinetti of the twenties and thirties had become a confirmed if unorthodox fascist, the Futurism of the *avant guerre* did not, as is often assumed, inevitably point in this direction. Here the example of Russian Futurism is especially instructive" (p. 30). The Russian artists of the "moment," that is, used the same imagery of "battle, destruction, annihilation" found in the Italian manifestoes to express their belief that a Brave New World could be achieved by means of war. Perloff could have alluded, to further support her case, to the example of the poststructuralist cultural politics of *Nomadology: The War Machine* (Deleuze and Guattari) or *Pure War* (Virilio and Lotringer) which continue the experiment with a left political aesthetics based on the rhetoric of war.

The Futurist Moment leads us to think about several open questions—a feature of its theoretical effect—by its insistence on the relevance of its primary object for our own "moment." The one that I find most interesting has to do with the ironic attitude toward technology that has replaced in postmodernism the initial optimism of Futurism. I am reminded of Hayden White's *Metahistory* with its cycle of tropes passing from metaphor to irony. White wondered if the cycle would then just repeat itself or if the circle might somehow be broken. Certainly we would not expect or desire the story of technology to be emplotted again as a Romance. Perloff shows that Futurism, in the context of modernist revolutions transforming every dimension of Western Civilisation, initiated a new attitude to the technology of writing by taking the printed page no longer as a transparent medium but as itself the object of art (viz. McLuhan's observation that the old medium becomes the content of the new one). She implies that one of the reasons for the renewed interest in Futurism is the intuition that those experiments marked a new moment in the evolution of writing beyond speech and print in response to the new technologies of communications.

The logic of this study, hinting at Perloff's next project, suggests that video may be seen as a means for the mechanical reproduction of a Futurist poetics in the collage/montage of editing. One of the effects of juxtaposition in collage/montage—its easiest and most natural device—is irony. To see this pos-

sibility in its purest state one might view a documentary such as *Atomic Cafe*, a compilation film made by editing into one text a large number of American propaganda films from the cold war period. On one hand, we might say that the ironic effects so readily producible in film/video reflect the ironic disillusionment with technology that Perloff describes as characterizing the present moment. On the other hand, there is the implied necessity to think the positive side of this new integration of art and technology.

Jacques Derrida recently has been discussing the lesson of Paul de Man's insight into the structural identity of irony and allegory. Perhaps this work might suggest a way to read the text with which Perloff concludes—Robert Smithson's "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey." The "monuments" consist of the bridges, car lots, sewage pipes, and smokestacks of an industrial environment, ironically presented as a contemporary version of Samuel Morse's painting. "Allegorical Landscape." Keeping in mind that this text, consisting of photographs and commentary, first appeared in an art journal, we may read it as a work of hybrid theory, using irony as a means to achieve critical distance. It conceptualizes in these ironic monuments the end of monumentality, which is construed not as a loss, but as a celebration of the end of an ideology of mourning that created such landscapes. Smithson's essay acquires this theoretical dimension by presenting an irony that must be read as an allegory.

This is not the place to go into the details of this possibility—a monumental critique of the culture of identity. Suffice it to say that Perloff's account of the Futurist moment indicates one major resource for models teaching us how to write beyond the book, in accord with the needs of a postindustrial *inventio*. A more immediate lesson for language departments might be the realization that some of the boundaries we still use to select our object of study no longer fit the territory of our culture. A reading of this book, with its color prints and excellent recreations of experimental productions, raises my desire for another syllabus, for a curriculum designed by Marjorie Perloff.

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Resistance Literature by Barbara Harlow. New York and London: Methuen, 1987. Pp. xx + 234. Paper. $39.95 (cloth), $11.95 (paper).

To read the preface in Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* is to become engaged in the promise of an exciting journey through literary territory that few American literary critics have charted. Using Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a departure point, Harlow draws us into the world of literature as political allegory with the warning that the exploration will challenge much of what is known about the ways in which we access literature. She counsels that the exploration of resistance literature, "like the resistance and national liberation movements which it reflects and in which it can be said to participate, not only demands recognition of its independent status and existence as literary production, but as such also presents a challenge to the codes and canons of both the theory and practice of literature and its criti-

cism as these have developed in the West." She questions whether structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, Marxism, or any of the old or currently fashionable critical theories are appropriate to and for the study of a literature that emanates from sources that are opposed to "the very social and political organization within which the theories are located and to which they respond." It is an intriguing question, and Harlow promises to respond to it as she studies the literature of a number of countries long dominated by Western forms of political oppression. She calls the particular works included in her book *resistance literature*, and asserts that part of her task will be to define that term and its application. In her first chapter—"The theoretical-historical context"—she attempts a definition, not so much from her personal perspective, but from that of the writers whose works she presents.

Harlow informs us that the term 'resistance' was first applied in a description of Palestinian literature in 1966 by the Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani in his study *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948–1968*. In a point that seems critical to our understanding of the meaning of "resistance literature," Harlow notes that Kanafani's study was written in 1966 before the June War of 1967 which resulted in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and that it therefore proposes an important distinction between literature which has been written "under occupation" and "exile" literature. In the case of a country "under occupation," Harlow explains, not only is there subjugation of a given population, but a significant intervention in the literary and cultural development of the dispossessed people. In such a situation, literature is presented as an "arena of struggle." According to Harlow, Kanafani's study, concerned with documenting the existence and material conditions of the production of Palestinian literature under Israeli occupation, was itself limited by a lack of sources, suggesting that occupation not only limits the production of an occupied people's literature, but defines its "parameters and approaches." Such conditions then impel a new method for examining the literature, for "the theory of resistance literature," Harlow asserts, "is in its politics."

Most of the works of the poets, novelists, critics, political detainees, and liberation fighters presented in *Resistance Literature* were written in territories in which large segments of the population were and still are, to a great extent, subjugated—South Africa, Palestine—or in which struggles for liberation from Western imperialism—Nicaragua—and neocolonial imperialism—Pakistan—are still being waged. Through these writers, Harlow further attempts to define resistance literature, and to formulate a critical discourse that serves the literature more appropriately than Western patterns do. But an acceptance, on the part of the reader, of both the need for a different theoretical formulation, and the literature as weapon in a particular resistance movement, requires evidence that other, mainly Western, theories are inadequate, and that the literary texts are indeed weapons in the resistance movements. Harlow tries to substantiate both. She succeeds to some extent in one, but fails in the other.

She is successful in showing the inadequacy of criticism that does not take into account the cultural, historical and political dimensions that not only provide the basis for the literature, but are inherent in the words of the poets and novelists. Nicolas Guillen's poem "Problems of underdevelopment" is a

case in point. In this poem, Guillen takes to task various European intellectuals represented by 'Monsieur Dupont' who calls (the Cuban) "uneducated/ because you don't know which was/ the favorite grandchild of Victor Hugo." And 'Herr Muller' who "has started shouting/ because you don't know the day/ (the exact one) when Bismarck died." And "Your friend Mr. Smith/ English or Yankee, I don't know/ becomes incensed when you write *Shell*/ (It seems that you hold back an "L"/ and that besides you pronounce it *chel*.) O.K. so what?/ When it's your turn/ have them say *cacarajicara*/ and where is the Aconcagua/ and who is Sucre/ and where on this planet/ did Marti die/ and please:/ make them always talk to you in Spanish." According to Harlow, the poem "posits from the outset the necessary connection between politics, economics and culture," and it implies the diminished stature of figures of hegemonic domination—Shell, Victor Hugo and the French Revolution, Bismarck and the Berlin Conference. The obvious irrelevance of European culture and political history to contemporary Cuban culture and ideology signals the distance between Western forms of literary criticism and the literary production of people intent upon creating, not only new forms of discourse, but new "histories" as well. The literature of the resistance is, in essence, inseparable from the history of the resistance; and poetry, to which Harlow devotes the second chapter in her book, "is itself an arena of struggle." Such poems therefore demand more than a detached reading since they are, Harlow says, "part of a historical process, one which requires 'taking sides.'"

Harlow has, indisputably, taken sides: she sides with the Palestinians who try to resist Israeli domination; with the Pakistanis, especially the Baluchistans, who continue to resist oppression from successive regimes controlled by Punjabis; with Angolans; and with the people of Mozambique who, despite their having rid their countries of Portuguese occupation, continue to seek liberation from cultural, political, and military domination. Harlow's list is long. It contains, in fact, the names of most of the so-called Third World countries that are also included on Amnesty International's list. In presenting the literature—poems, narratives, memoirs, etc.—within their various historical and political contexts, Harlow makes a strong case for the possible ineffectiveness of Western forms of literary criticism. But while *Resistance Literature* contains more than enough cases of liberation movements, and sufficient examples of the literatures that have been born of those struggles to warrant a new form of discourse, Harlow has still not provided a clear literary theoretical alternative. The problem can be illustrated thusly: to read Carolina Maria De Jesus' story of abject poverty in the favelas of Sao Paulo in *Child of the Dark* is to be immediately conscious of the hunger, not just for food, but for words, for language, for the power—in this instance "paper"—through which she can tell the history of oppression, degradation, and cultural domination suffered by dark-skinned people in Brazil. De Jesus' story is autobiographical, and is therefore her/story as well as history. We see, beyond anything else, her oppression, but we also see her small triumphs, and we rejoice in them. And though her story has been written down for her by a newspaperman learned in the art of communication, it is Carolina's voice we hear resonant with the pathos of life in the favelas. Are critics to bypass all but the history in this work? Few would want to. But if they wish to take sides, like

Harlow, are they then not limited, in the absence of an alternative theory, to criticism that emphasizes the historicity of the work and nothing else? Literature, as we have come to know and appreciate it, and as most writers continue to insist that we see it, is largely myth. Harlow would insist, however, that it is largely history, and therein lies a problem, not only for librarians who may have trouble classifying *Resistance Literature*, but for those literary critics who, while wishing to explore the too-long neglected literature of the Third World, are guided by no clear theory. But perhaps Harlow cannot provide an alternative theory in the absence of a definition of *resistance literature*, and especially *resistance literature* that cuts across so many different cultures.

What is *resistance literature?* Ostensibly, it is literature as a weapon used in a struggle for liberation. A study of it should then provide us with its direct and potent relationship to the struggle. We should know more about the poems than that they were written by writers who may themselves be engaged in physical resistance. What has been the influence, for example, of Kumalo's poem, "Red our color" upon the resistance movement in Soweto, or the impact of Nadine Gordimer's novel, *July's People* upon the insensibilities of the racist South African regime, and how has a narrative from a political detainee, written on toilet paper—the only medium available—been instructive to those who seek to overcome political oppression? Are we to assume that they have had the same impact upon guerrillas as has Che Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare?* Che's book is certainly *resistance literature* but is it literature? Part of the difficulty Harlow faces in defining *resistance literature* is that so much of the works she presents is not, in fact, literature, but history, journalism, and political tract, and by ranging so far afield, she distances herself from what has come to be accepted as literature. (The reader, however, who accepts *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung* as literature will take no issue with the works Harlow calls resistance literature.) *Resistance Literature* itself becomes a study that defies classification. It is not, in the known sense, literary criticism. It is, in some of its aspects, especially tone, a manifesto, but like most manifestos, it is long on promises and short on delivery. Harlow does provide informative background for those readers who may wish to pursue a study of the relationship between resistance struggles and literature, and for the unschooled, she provides references to a number of works by African and Latin American women writers who are notoriously left out of anthologies. But students of literary theory will find Selwyn Cudjoe's book, *Resistance and Caribbean Literature* (1980) far more useful for its explicit discussions of theoretical models essential to any study of the literature of Third World people or any other people.

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Post-structuralism and the Question of History, edited by Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Pp. viii + 292. $39.50.

The ambiguous title of this collection of essays, *Post-structuralism and the Question of History,* immediately sends the reader in two different directions: the place of history within post-structuralism and the place of post-structuralism within history. It is the former which occupies most of the volume, the extent to which post-structural arguments are grounded within history. But just what is meant by the term "history," or worse yet "History," is anyone's guess these days; often "history" functions as thinly disguised code for politics and class-struggle, and indeed the occasion for this book is the prolonged Marxist attack on what the left perceives to be the ahistorical and apolitical strains of post-structuralism, by which is often meant American Deconstruction, and the Yale School (see p. 5). In his appropriately titled essay "Demanding History," Bennington's version of the title of this collection is: "The Left puts the question of History to Deconstruction" (p. 16). In some ways then, *Post-structuralism and the Question of History* extends the subject and struggle of the *Diacritics* issue, "Marx after Derrida," [with an aggressive rather than temporal reading of the preposition] and, from the left, Michael Ryan's *Marxism and Deconstruction,* Terry Eagleton's *Walter Benjamin,* and just about all of Fredric Jameson's work, but most especially, *The Political Unconscious.*

Frank Lentricchia comes in for a good deal of attention in the introduction, for his arguments about post-structuralism as the New New Criticism in *After New Criticism,* and more specifically for his attack on Paul de Man in *Criticism and Social Change*—it is, in short, the accusation that Deconstruction is yet another idealization that is under question. One of the subtexts of this book is the split in Anglo-American criticism, for it consists largely of English devotees of continental theory attacking Americans for their misuse of theory (it is no accident that three quarters of the theorists under attack here, Lentricchia, Jameson, Said, and Eagleton, work in the US). In an extremely odd historical juncture, British critics find themselves positioned in between the philosophical French and the political Americans, siding with the French. In Britain these issues tend to reflect the internal debate within Marxism between the Hegelian wing and the Althusserian wing, though the virulent debate surrounding the work of Hindess and Hirst seems to have had little impact in America.

By and large, the essays in this volume take up the defense of post-structuralism per se and Derrida in particular by problematizing attempts to ground argument in history, history which is itself textualized. In the introduction, Bennington and Young set the stage by quoting Derrida's identification of "language as the origin of history" (p. 8). If deconstruction can argue that history is always textualized, they can erase it as a referent, and so defeat the Marxist polemical attack: how can Marxists continue to cry "Always historicize!" when Derrida has already deconstructed history? The watch word here is "naive": "the demand to archaeologize, historicize, contextualize, continues to remain dangerously naive" (Wordsworth, p. 118—"regressive" is another term liberally invoked by both sides). In another variant,

Marxists fail to understand or appreciate the sophistication of Derrida's project: Edward Said, for example is accused of a "quite stunning lack of understanding of Derrida's work" (Hobson, p. 101).

Put another way, these essays and the larger debate represent yet another struggle for hegemony among the fragmented and atomized disciplines, between history and philosophy, between Derrida (philosophy) and Marx (political economy) as the master discourse. Despite decades of effort to efface this fragmentation and reforge a unified discourse of the human sciences, we seem to be back to square one in a struggle for hegemony or precedence.

What is really under question here is not so much leftist hostility to the idealizing or ahistorical or apolitical tendencies of much Deconstruction. (The violent attack on theory and Althusser's anti-historicism that makes up E. P. Thompson's *Poverty of Theory,* for example, is not of interest here.) Rather, it is the Marxist appropriation of textuality and the textualizing of History. That is to say, while Terry Eagleton is the figure most often attacked by name here, by implication, it is Fredric Jameson who is most troublesome. How can Marxism "accept the consequences of its own discursivity" (Bennett, p. 67) and yet regularly make reference to, appeal to, and claims for the "real, material conditions"? All of the writers collected here reject any unproblematized view or uses of history (Attridge credits Saussure with "problematizing the notion of history," perhaps the greatest compliment in the volume, p. 186). The textualizing of history is presented with brilliant clarity by Hindess and Hirst:

> by definition, all that is past does not exist. To be accurate the object of history is whatever is *represented* as having hitherto existed. The essence of this representation is preserved in records and documents. History's object, the hitherto existing, does not exist except in the modality of its current existence, as representations. It is present as its opposite and absent as itself. Historical practice refuses to recognize this identity of opposites, it conceives its object as a real concrete object, as the given conditions of the past. This real object is accessible *through* its representation. *(Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production,* p. 309).

A textualized conception of history makes simple appeals to history and historical evidence highly dubious. As Mark Cousins puts it in "The Practice of Historical Investigation," "What are opposed here are the attempts or assumptions that a historical ground can be established which provides a certain test of knowledge in the human sciences" (p. 128).

These are issues taken up with equal fervor on the left as well, most notably in Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious,* in which Jameson avoids a naively positivistic historicism by employing Althusser's "scientific" version of anti-historicism: "history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but . . . as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textualized form, and . . . our approach to it and the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (*Political Unconscious,* p. 35). This is not to say that history is merely a text, and therefore available to us only by way of interpretation and narrative, as Hayden White might argue. Again, Jameson insists that, "history—Althusser's 'absent

cause,' Lacan's 'Real'—is *not* a text, for it is fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational; what can be added, however, is the proviso that history is inaccessible to us except in textual form, or in other words, that it can be approached only by way of prior (re)textualization." History is neither mere writing nor mere fact, neither écriture nor reflection, and too much emphasis on either accounts for the failures of deconstruction on the one hand, and of traditional historical materialism on the other:

> Thus, to insist on either of the two inseparable yet incommensurable dimensions of the symbolic act without the other: to overemphasize the active way in which the text reorganizes its subtext (in order, presumably, to reach the triumphant conclusion that the 'referent' does not exist); or on the other hand to stress the imaginary status of the symbolic act so completely as to reify its social ground, now no longer understood as a subtext but merely as some inert given that the text passively or fantasmatically 'reflects'—to overstress either of these functions of the symbolic act at the expense of the other is surely to produce sheer ideology, whether it be, as in the first alternative, the ideology of structuralism, or, in the second, that of vulgar materialism (*Political Unconscious*, p. 82).

At this point, having theorized, textualized, and problematized any simple, positivistic, chronicle-like notion of history, *Post-structuralism and the Question of History* can be read as a revealing document in contemporary theoretical struggles over the concept of history and the right to invoke or appeal to history. The fatal weakness of many of these essays is their tendency to replicate the infantalizing terms of the debate (naive, regressive—"always historicize," "always theorize"). It is difficult not to conclude that this set of essays will do little to sway one side or the other from their entrenched positions, for these essays are largely a repetition of already articulated arguments, albeit conveniently collected together here. In part this failure is the result of a too narrow focus, an opposition between Marxism and Deconstruction. Insufficient attention paid to the work of Althusser, to Feminism, and finally, to New Historicism. There is no attention paid to the feminist syntheses of materialism and post-structuralism; only Mary Nyquist's essay, "Fallen Differences, Phallogocentric Discourses: Losing *Paradise Lost* to History" deals directly with feminist issues. Furthermore, the so called "New Historicism" of Greenblatt, Montrose, Goldberg, Dollimore, Sinfield, and others is not mentioned at all; the enormous prestige of Foucault to New Historicism, and its largely successful alliance between the use of Foucault and Feminist theory is ignored. Additionally, why are Eagleton, Lentricchia, Jameson, Said or Anderson not represented here, since their positions are the ones most consistently attacked? Tony Bennett is put in the position of articulating and defending the left position (or more properly, a left position), and his is not a strong essay. Finally, the influence of Althusser's attack on historicism is never sufficiently accounted for here.

In general, these essays get better towards the second half of the volume, after the defensive stance is broken down, from Jean-François Lyotard's "The Sign of History" onwards. In the last groups of essays, which are less theo-

retically (and polemically) oriented, we can discern an attempt to assimilate the analysis of capital [i.e. Marxism] into post-structural discourse; most notably in "The Phonograph in Africa," William Pietz offers an attempt at "The post-structuralist historical project of schizo-analysis" derived from Deluze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (p. 268). The best essay in *Post-structuralism and the Question of History* is Gayatri Spivak's "Speculations on Reading Marx: After Reading Derrida." This is a demanding but very suggestive essay on the *Grundrisse*, with a Derridean reading of Marx's analysis of money as sign:

> Marx's consideration of money, as he circles that theme in the collection of notebooks posthumously published as the *Grundrisse*, can be read in terms of these general polemics of speech against writing. . . . The type of analysis I am proposing would hinge on the deconstruction of the opposition between the rational and the mystified [from the discussion of commodity in *Capital*]. I shall go on to suggest that there is room for this deconstruction in Marx's own text (pp. 32 & 45).

Unlike the previous essays, Spivak is quite a home both with Marx and with Derrida, and so the essay bears none of the defensive tone of the others. This essay is the most successful in the volume, for it entirely escapes the "Derrida is/isn't sufficiently historical/political," and proceeds with the work of analysis, skillfully blending Marxist and Derridean texts. In some sense, this essay makes the argument of the volume a non-issue: if Marx and Derrida can be brought together with such skill and insight, why are we fighting about it? Spivak is capable of a brilliant exercise in dialectical argument, raising and transforming both sides of the dialectic. Like Jameson, Spivak dialectically transcends the crippling opposition between a decadent, self-referential, self-serving, apolitical elitist, self-indulgent theorizing and a politically committed analysis of class-conflict.

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Criticism in Society: Interviews with Jacques Derrida, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, Frank Kermode, Edward Said, Barbara Johnson, Frank Lentricchia, and J. Hillis Miller by Imre Salusinsky. New Accents, ed. Terence Hawkes. New York and London: Methuen, 1987. Pp. xii + 244. $18.95.

What a pint of Haagen-Daz stashed in the freezer may be to the dieter sneaking downstairs at two A. M., a volume of interviews with major contemporary critics may be to "readers who are, perhaps, not terribly schooled in literary criticism" (p. 60). Here, at last, there may be an end to deferral, or at least a moment of satisfaction. Derrida without the wise-guy stuff, Bloom buttonholed somewhere short of that sublime peak where the exhausting *agon* of criticism proper is fought out, or J. Hillis Miller, for Chrissakes, as just plain J.: here there is promise of respite for readers identified in Methuen's advertising as creatures who may find the "recent movement in literary theory and the leaders in the field . . . perplexing and even intimidating."

Those who *are* "terribly schooled," or schooled in terror, may immediately sniff out the poison in this gift. Like the Haagen-Daz, the interview holds danger as well as allure. This danger lies, of course, in the promise of dialectics, which few leaders would lay heavy bets on these days, as these interviews make clear. *Caveat lector.*

Still, the desire for the interview need not be (as this book perhaps unwittingly suggests) a naive impulse. Though they may be moved by the ignoble wish to be philosophy's valet—to see the Idea in its dressing gown, divested of the radiance it assumes to keep the public awed and peers jockeying for shared illumination—purchasers of this volume might also have an appropriately poststructuralist motivation. They might want to have theory show itself to be, well, more *literary:* sparkling figure rather than chilly proposition, anecdote rather than schema, pulsing narrative in the place of creepy rituals of professional argumentation. And there is at least one other likely motivation, one this book repeatedly evokes and yet firmly represses, which we'll get to below.

But first the obvious dangers. One can read too much, perhaps, into Harold Bloom's outburst about his proletarian origins, in which he identifies himself as "the son of a New York garment worker, who was an unwilling member of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union, which he always despised" (p. 66). (But certainly the acorn didn't fall far from the oak, to judge from the apoplexy Bloom seems to court in discussing the powers-that-be in academe.) As she herself suggests, one might categorize Barbara Johnson too quickly if one gave too much weight to the fact that she has a dog she's named "Nietzsche" (p. 160). And perhaps one should be on guard against even the funniest moments, as when Bloom insists that he isn't paranoid because he's "past that stage" (p. 58) or when Frank Lentricchia seems piqued that "everyone wants to be political": "It makes me want to say I'm not interested in this anymore" (p. 197). (Didn't G. Marx have a joke along these lines?)

Readers will be on relatively safe ground in accepting this book as a useful guide to the work of these influential critics: Imre Salusinsky's introductions to each interview are wonderfully lucid surveys of the scholarly career and critical predilictions of each writer, and the brief introduction to the volume as a whole is also useful and witty. And in the interviews themselves, Salusinsky makes an engaging and nimble interlocutor.

The least interesting part of these conversations is Salusinsky's half-hearted attempt to give the volume cohesion by having these critics (with the exception of Derrida, who refused) illustrate how they begin to approach texts by commenting on Wallace Stevens' "Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself." The comments on this work tend to be neither sharp perceptions nor revelatory moves but rather, as might be expected, sophisticated banter. (These people didn't get to be where they are by falling into swamps such as "informality"—Derrida's refusal is merely the rigorous statement of the tactics they all employ.) The volume is more successful at generating discussion on "criticism in society," with "society" here primarily suggesting questions about Western universities (do they compromise the intellectual and the function of criticism?), literature (how is it or should it be defined?), reading (to what extent, if any, is it a political practice?), and teaching (how

does one do it, given one's beliefs on the foregoing topics?). As one might expect, again, these discussions are sometimes obtuse (Kermode on challenges to the canon), hilarious (the egregious Bloom on anything), boring (Hartman trying not to say he believes in liberal pluralism), and real smart (Barbara Johnson's section being the most tightly argued, Edward Said's the most provocative in the way it makes the others' concerns seem impoverished).

This book may be most interesting, though, in terms of a critical approach discussed at length in almost all the interviews and yet unrepresented in this volume: Marxism. (Even Lentricchia notes that he doesn't call himself a Marxist, for reasons that seem to have something to do with the people he'd have to listen to at MLA conventions.) One doesn't have to be a Marxist—as I am not, as I'll say in the new spirit of candor introduced to American politics by the Gary Hart debacle—to find this repeated reference to Marxism rather peculiar. Though Salusinsky warns against drawing any conclusions from the critics who aren't included in this volume, one wonders how to characterize an exploration of "criticism in society" that omits a representative of the critical approach that has most clearly taken this issue as its orientation and that is (according to some of the contributors here) flourishing only too well in Western universities these days.

Terms such as "university," "politics," and "state" are generally addressed here either in anecdotes or in abstractions: the bogey of Marxism is the excluded middle that would make the issue of criticism in society discomfiting rather than edifying and entertaining, as it purports to be here. Almost everyone in this volume pledges resistance to totalization, and behind this peculiar role of Marxism there is surely a reaction against totalitarianism; but this is not the whole story. For there is a resistance to totality that proves itself by forever producing new responses, readings, and feelings—in other words, aesthetics—and there is a resistance that recognizes how aesthetics, too, cannot escape the lure of totalization. Said and Johnson address this issue of the politics of aesthetics most directly, while it is approached as well by Lentricchia and Derrida and in one way or another by all the other contributors; but aesthetics remains what is least interrogated in this volume. In this respect *Criticism in Society* appears haunted by the sense that a dialogue more radical than these discussions—a dialogue here caricatured as Marxism—would find the pleasures of the text that it celebrates to be guilty pleasures. But this book *desires* to be haunted by this figure of Marxism. Guilt is the easiest thing in the world for criticism to handle, as dieters know all too well; and as long as it can create this bogey of guilt, aesthetics will succeed in failing to face up to its social responsibilities.

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