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The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form by Kathryn L. Lynch. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988. Pp. xiv + 263. $35.00.

Kathryn Lynch's intriguing and fascinating study of medieval dream vision poetry reinterprets the dream vision genre and re-evaluates the five works she identifies as central to her discussion—Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Alain de Lille's *De Planctu Naturae*, Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, Dante's *Purgatorio*, and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. She limits her focus to what she calls the "high medieval dream vision poem," a subgenre which she identifies as philosophical (a term she prefers over "Boethian"), crystallizing within the formative period approximately between the years 1100 and 1300. Her background material has been thoroughly researched, and her thesis proceeds logically and forcefully along consistently subtle and finely nuanced readings. Drawing upon a wide range of earlier classical and medieval visions, theories of dreams, and modern critical commentary, Lynch argues persuasively for a "historicization" of the dream vision genre, by which she means linking such poems to their specific philosophical and cultural backgrounds.

In many ways, Lynch's book is an important event in medieval dream vision studies. She views "genre" in terms of reception theory, hermeneutics, and traditional historical scholarship, and while she does not redefine the term, she nevertheless arrives at a new working synthesis; her combined diachronic and synchronic approach avoids the essentialist and formalist extremes of much earlier and current dream vision theory. Her work is decidedly "historicist" in the best traditional sense, although she denies that view which sees genre as merely reflective or expressive of meaning. Susceptible to historical pressures, genre nevertheless participates in meaning production, its evolutionary modifications themselves contributing to philosophical exploration of generic preoccupations. Her analyses of individual works remain within the confines of traditional criticism, yet within her generic paradigm she adapts her methods to the work in hand with close and sensitive attention to stylistics as well as the more conventional concerns of allegorical figure and narrative structure. Finally, her reassessment of medieval literary theory, especially her exploration of the role and function of the imagination, provides a necessary chapter in the history of medieval dream vision criticism, and represents a substantial insight into both the genre and the literature of the period.

As her title suggests, however, Lynch sets for herself a formidable and ambitious task. Philosophy, literary theory, criticism, and dream theory, placed within the historical perspectives of shifting medieval climates of opinion, form the background to interpretation. The result is a complex book richly textured with detailed and highly interdisciplinary arguments which defy accurate summary, and my commentary must necessarily be selective. A book of such scope, of course, frequently entails risks proportional to the venture, and the real accomplishment of this book lies in the relatively few weaknesses discernible among its many strengths.

Lynch argues that within the greater genre of dream vision poetry we can distinguish a subgenre—the philosophical vision. Originating with Boethius'

Consolation, the philosophical vision has an explicitly discursive function; repeating allegorical characters (Nature, Reason, and Genius) and a shared concern with arguments centered on sex, love, the limits of human knowledge, and the use and status of poetic fictions define its basic parameters. The informing principle behind this type of vision is the preoccupation with "order" (the harmony of the natural and the supernatural) and its intelligibility.

Because the medieval spirit of synthesis has its location in the thirteenth century and prior to it, Lynch modifies her scope to include only the High Medieval Dream Vision. The thrust for the harmony of nature and supernature rests in the security of an earlier metaphysics, based on the realist theory of abstraction, and when this theory breaks down in the fourteenth century, Lynch argues, poets and poetry associated with the dream vision change. Poets writing philosophical visions, then, are High as opposed to Late Medieval figures, or, like Dante and John Gower, conservatives harkening back to an older world view. Lynch justifies her historical limitation of the subgenre on the premise that the prenominalist epistemological model based on the metaphysical theory of abstraction represents the essential paradigm, and much of her book explores this paradigm in itself and in context of the five major works and their immediate sources, which she analyzes.

The limited scope of Lynch's book is both a strength and weakness. It allows her a workable field of inquiry which avoids some of the pitfalls of earlier studies. Scholars have grouped as dream visions works so numerous and diverse in character that generalizations about genre become too broad to be of much use. Attempts to discover archetypes connecting dream visions with actual dreams and visions tend to create essences or universals which deny the necessary historical positioning of particular works and reduce distinctions between the medieval period and ours. Lynch seeks to examine the philosophical vision as it evolves in medieval time subject to changing historical (philosophical) pressures, and her manageable focus restricts her perspective to texts similar in form and aim. Her willingness to include Dante and Gower, however, threatens her self-imposed limitations, and begs several questions. If Gower, why not Chaucer and Langland? Lynch answers that while Langland and Chaucer engage similar problems in their dream visions, their fourteenth century ambiguity towards clear possibilities of knowing implies a loss of the harmonizing struggle central to the philosophical vision (Langland) or a distorting contamination of philosophical vision by the courtly love subgenre with its different intentions (Chaucer). Since Chaucer and Langland base large portions of their works on philosophical visions Lynch deems central (Langland's Knyde presents the dreamer with "ensaumples to knowe,/Thorugh ech a creature, Kynde my creatour to lovye" [Passus 11, B-Text, 324–25] and Chaucer's "goddesse Nature" is devised "right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde" [*The Parliament of Fowls*, 303, 316] refer respectively to the theory of abstraction and the *Plaint of Nature*), exclusion of them and other later writers would seem to require a fuller justification than Lynch provides. Furthermore, Dante's philosophical vision consists of only part of the *Purgatorio* (cantos 9–27), and although one can agree with Lynch that Dante seems in this section of the *Commedia* preoccupied with a philosophical ascent from imagination and image to reason and idea, can we legitimately extract relevant passages and present them as "subgeneric," equivalent to the formal unity the philosophical vision represents?

The principle which animates Lynch's discussion, however, is her outline of the essentially Aristotelian theory of abstraction and the role imagination plays in its medieval adaptation. Medieval literary theory has occasioned much recent interest and attention, both in its own right and as part of our current fascination with literary theory within the discipline of English studies. Lynch contributes to this ongoing debate with her illustration of interdisciplinary correspondences, for she argues persuasively for a series of key connections among the theory of abstraction, medieval faculty psychology, liminal experiences, dream lore, ritual and narrative structure, and theories of literature. According to the theory of abstraction, knowledge begins with sense impressions from the natural, phenomenal world; imagination creates "images" of particular impressions, stores them, and combines them; reason then abstracts from these images "essences," "universals" or "ideas," the intellectual foundation of knowledge in realist or moderately realist philosophy; memory stores the conclusions of reason and perhaps images of sense impression, establishing the possibility of experience. The three faculties—imagination, reason, and memory—allow the process of knowledge to take place, and are capable, then, of actualizing a harmony between the natural world of appearances and the intelligible world of ideas, which correspond to the ideas in the mind of God responsible for the creation of the natural world in the first place. As Lynch points out, the imagination functions as the bridging faculty, the link between nature and supernature and therefore a crucial factor in the discovery of truth and in the reconciliation of the divine and natural orders.

This is the "realist paradigm" which Lynch posits as the fundamental interpretive framework of the High Middle Ages. Writers of philosophical visions do not seek to repeat the paradigm, but to defend it, to incorporate within its structures threatening ideas and experiences. Consequently, historical pressures exerted on any individual author result in a continuous as opposed to discontinuous change in the paradigm, and as the process of accommodation becomes more and more difficult with the emergence of new conflicting views and empirical data, the attempt takes the form of a reconsideration and restructuring of first principles. The philosophical vision, then, becomes a self-reflexive genre, rewriting the essential relations among imagination, memory, and reason. This view of an intellectually homogenous High Middle Ages, however, jeopardizes her historicism with the very essentialism she claims to avoid. Although Lynch at times seems aware of this paradox, her efforts to eliminate it appear on a theoretical level of assertion, whereas in practice she casts an inevitable strain on her reading of individual works in order to justify and confirm her thesis.

The most original and interesting aspect of the book lies in its exploration of medieval poetics, and Lynch supplies a much needed and desired analysis of period views of the imagination and the value of poetry. An obvious gap, given the stress on the theory of abstraction, lies in the absence of sustained discussion of memory, especially since the role of memory alters depending on whether one sees it in a Platonic or Aristotelian light. Platonic reminiscence may have been superseded by Aristotelian memory, but what then is the ordering function and role of Aristotelian memory?

Imagination, however, gains in scope and importance in the thirteenth cen-

tury, affecting the significance of its function in dreams, poetry, and the acquisition of knowledge. Imagination's role in harmonizing nature (images of phenomena) and reason/supernature (knowledge of underlying order or ideas in phenomenal images) is clear; without imagination, knowledge and harmony cannot take place. At the same time, imagination limits the intellect, necessarily subjecting it to the world of the senses and to possible error, since the imagination can also produce false images in dreams or combine various sensous impressions even in waking. The proper use of the imagination for medieval theorists lies not in its unrestrained capacity to formulate and store images, but in its service to reason; imagination has to be ordered to reason or intellect. In addition to the power of apprehension, imagination had other creative resources, which in the High Middle Ages, Lynch claims, grew in importance. In the first place, it was in itself *creative*, capable of generating images, combining and recalling them without any stimulation from external senses, and to present them to other faculties of the mind for judgement; creative images so ordered by reason imitate divine truth. Lynch notices another related faculty, *ingenium*, sometimes conceived as part of imagination, and at other times a separate but associated faculty, endowed with perception, a prerational kind of understanding; for Dante, *ingenio* denotes the poetic power of fashioning comparisons or embodying ineffable ideas. *Ingenium* becomes an inspired faculty, informed by an ability to interpret both material and immaterial reality, similar to the modern idea of "genius" —the gift of poetic inspiration and invention (in the medieval sense of discovery but also in the sense of the creation of prerational images). Working together with reason, it enables the poet to order or discipline his subject matter in order to express through sensible images eternal truth. Writers of philosophical visions, Lynch implies, because of the new scope and function of imagination/*ingenium*, understand poetic art or "making" as analogous to God's creation: "Indeed, poetry's achievement grows not only out of the poet's intention to create discrete images of truth but also by the capacity of his narrative to create an order or sequence of experience that will allow the reader by the end of the work to abstract God's truth from poetic images as he does also from images in nature" (44). Philosophical visions present not only images but a process of vision, "an epistemological journey," imitative of the process of knowing.

Lynch's reassessment of imagination suggests that medieval poets were not as rigid and as schematized as many have been led to believe, and the idea of a rational expressive creativity maintains historical difference without entirely alienating medieval practitioners from later "irrational" theories of creativity. "Genius" forms a bridge where before none existed. Lynch also shows that in many medieval texts of commentary and criticism—and significantly in many of the philosophical visions of her study—the word *ingenium* frequently appears: in Dante, Alain, and Jean de Meun, for example. She argues cogently throughout that the allegorical figure "Genius," newly conceived by Alain and prominent in subsequent philosophical visions, combines generative force with *ingenium*, and that the imaginative knowing process culminates with the reconciliation inherent in this figure's nature and role. Moreover, this new dignity of imagination affects poetic and dream theories; Augustine's *visio spiritualis* supplies a justifiable category of dream vision,

which imitates the epistemological journey and does so under the heightened activity of the imagination. The philosophical vision represents the perfect medium, where the redemption of the imagination, and therefore the bridge between nature and supernature, becomes both subject and form. Moreover, the reader, as he struggles with the dreamer in the attempt at understanding, participates in the epistemological experience, a formal poetic strength not available to philosophy, a means of effecting a rational/imaginative reconciliation not possible in discursive prose. Lynch initiates in a sound and stimulating manner a discourse of medieval imagination which promises to become the focus of future students of medieval poetics.

Lynch's model for the philosophical vision remains Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, the standard model for most theories of medieval dream vision genre, as in the recent studies of J. Stephen Russell, *The English Dream Vision*, and Michael Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse*. Lynch differs from other readers in seeing the *Consolation* as an epistemological journey incorporating the theory of abstraction as an internal narrative structure, not simply a doctrine. Boethius addresses the problem of evil in a world created and governed by a good and rational God, and while he combines Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of knowing, the problem of reconciliation, together with the suggestive but only partly realized Aristotelian solution, generates the subsequent rewriting of later authors. Lady Philosophy represents Reason and Archetypal Memory, and the narrator, initiating the generic role of subsequent dreamers in philosophical visions, represents the disordered or unredeemed human imagination, which undergoes "ordering." Personal worldy experience, natural images, and "wounded muses" form the opening perspective, and Lynch notes that subsequent philosophical visions similarly open with a luxuriance of images to a dreamer who lacks the strength of reason to interpret them correctly. At the end of the *Consolation*, the meaning of these "seminal images" becomes clarified, the growth of awareness in the increasingly healed dreamer sprouting from the seeds themselves. Although the final summation of truth is left to the prose of Lady Philosophy, the final four poems, spoken by the newly aware dreamer, offer an "emotional equivalent to reason" (73), images reflecting divine truth finally ordered by and aligned to Lady Philosophy.

The other philosophical visions follow this model of the "natural" order of knowing, and each in turn attempts to modify and contemporize the resolutions posited by Boethius in light of current epistemological challenges occasioned by new strains placed on the theory of abstraction. Lynch's strategy is to examine the modulating shifts in allegorical figures and to discover the subsequent poetic thrust of imaging and imagining. Alain in *De Planctu Naturae* clarifies the Aristotelian metaphysical strain evident in Boethius by substituting Nature for Lady Philosophy. Here is no longer merely the voice of philosophical reason, but the voice of reason in nature; she represents, in other words, that reason which permits man to abstract truth from created nature. The dreamer's disordered imagination emerges in his opening confusion, but also in the limitations naturally imposed on Nature in her initial reasonings; she is not so much a projection of the dreamer's unredeemed self as a figure limiting her discussion to the limited capacity of the dreamer. Alain's Genius effects the desired reconciliation. A symbol of natural genera-

tive force, he also represents imagination aligned with Nature (Reason), his very presence indicating the epistemological progress of the dreamer. As a figure of imagination (genius/*ingenium*), Genius initiates the cognitive process that culminates in the highest truths. *De Planctu* rewrites the allegorical figure of Genius, and reformulates his role, for the doctrine Genius declares is not as important as the image he figures, and the resolution he effects derives from his mythic and metaphorical aspects. Alain, Lynch suggests, continues the Boethian model in the direction of Aristotelian epistemology.

Lynch sees Jean de Meun, Dante, and Gower facing serious problems with the model, marked by the Bishop Tempier's condemnation of 219 Averroistic and Aristotelian propositions in 1277. Philosophy with its "double truth" had gone too far in Tempier's view, and he narrowed the areas open to the explorations of natural reason divorced from revelation and theology. Whether or not this directly led to the development of conceptualist logic which ultimately defied and dismantled the claims of metaphysical reason is still debated, but at the very least it casts doubt on the possibility of human reason discovering eternal truth. Jean's answer, Lynch argues, was to suggest to Tempier that the abuse of reason, not reason itself, was to blame. His continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* represents an adjustment of Guillaume's section in the direction of the philosophical vision, but negatively conceived, for here we see the failure and not the achievement of vision. Lynch's analysis here is sensitive and perceptive. Reason, rejected by Amans, nevertheless remains the only unquestioned authority figure in the poem. Genius and Nature now reflect a disordered imagination which never emerges from confusion, and consequently their arguments are incoherent, blasphemous, and frequently heretical, subscribing to many of the views condemned by Tempier. Jean's revision of the dreamer also points to historical accommodation. He becomes a "cartoon nominalist" (126) who denies belief in any essential reality inhering in the thing itself, and who accepts the position that universals exist only in the mind. He shares the same kind of generic epistemological failure as other dreamers, except in reverse. He overabstracts, rather than over-imagines, but because his abstractions have no concrete referent, his progress from image to abstraction is impossible, and he rejects Reason. The presence of Reason, however, indicates that rational study need not end this way, and that rational endeavors in themselves are not evil, but can lead to the evil of unrestrained eroticism when abused. This is an attractive reading, although one which rationalizes the ironies, contradictions, blasphemies, and anomalies of the *Roman* out of existence, depriving it of those tensions which to many are its very strengths.

Dante and Gower represent conservative voices among the growing crowd of epistemological doubts which torment the fourteenth century, and both take up the issue of "misguided love" merged with the philosophical vision by Jean de Meun. Even though Dante dispenses with the familiar allegorical figures of Reason, Nature, or Genius, *Purgatorio* (9–27) represents "the most ambitious and confident history of a spiritual journey ever attempted" (146), a brilliant offensive maneuver in the midst of increasingly defensive tactics. Placed between the infernal region of unregenerate sin and corporeality and the paradisiacal region of beatitude, purgatory appropriately symbolizes the bridge between the two, and the location of Dante's regeneration of sight and

insight. Here Dante explores "earthly or human sins of the imagination" (152) and his pilgrim moves from misplaced imaginative desire at the Gates of Purgatory to the inner rectitude of Earthly Paradise, guided by Virgil (reason) and then Beatrice. Three dream visions and an apostrophe to illuminated imagination (canto 17) confirm Lynch's reading of the subject and structure of this section, with its tribute to the powers of human apprehension stretching from the imagination to the stars. Gower, however, is more self-conscious and less confident, "re-visioning" (178) Jean's Genius in a manner both confirming and questioning the epistemological journey. A figure of disordered imagination at the beginning of the *Confessio*, Genius grows into ordered understanding, like Amans; "practice, effect, and intent have been out of balance" (196) throughout most of the poem, for Genius often misinterprets his exempla, the significance of which emerges by means of counterpointing stylistic foregrounding. Gower's Genius owes much to Jean's, except that he moves from order to disorder, and finally embodies the rationalized imagination *necessary* for the act of knowing and the consequent reconciliation of nature and supernature. Gower's is a rearguard action, however, in the battle to save the theory of abstraction. Where Jean challenges opposition and Dante opposes it, Gower retreats into a nostalgic conservatism, unable to sustain convincingly a rapport between world and Word.

The High Medieval Dream Vision erects a solid interdisciplinary edifice, a substantial overview of subgenre capable of locating and describing the internal structures and "mechanics" (8) of some of the most influential medieval works. Lynch's rational and historical analysis does justice to the philosophical nature of her thesis, although dispensing with differences and contradictions which other critical perspectives might offer. Her bibliography is up to date and thorough, and her text virtually error-free, the only significant exception being the unfortunate phrase "unintelligible form" (31). At the same time, these remarks do not detract from the real achievement of Lynch's work. This is the kind of book on dream vision poetry medievalists have been waiting for, and it promises to initiate new directions by sparking challenge as well as continuation.

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The Death of Literature by Alvin Kernan. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. Pp. ix + 230. $22.50.

Alvin Kernan's new book consists of eight miscellaneous chapters, framed by an Introduction and an Epilogue that carry the weight of the overall argument. The central topic that Kernan addresses is the large-scale, multifaceted institutional and cultural change of "the past thirty years" (p. 1), a time scheme that makes the 1960s the crucial turning point in the demise of the old order that prevailed "between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-twentieth" (pp. 5–6). The key question becomes: how does Kernan characterize the new situation in our current historical moment?

Kernan's relation to the topic of cultural change is organized by his alterna-

tion between the two postures of journalist and prophet. In the former role, he parades a collection of contemporary symptoms in a breezy, cursory fashion. His account of curricular change at Stanford is representative of the catchy, superficial style of tabloid reportage:

> In 1988, Stanford University, for example, made the front pages and the TV news programs with a debate about whether its required course in great books, including many works of literature, should drop some of the classics, all written by "dead white males," to make room for the inclusion of books by women, blacks, and Third World writers. The great books which had hitherto formed the basis of liberal education were denounced as elitist, Eurocentric, and the tools of imperialism. Under this kind of pressure, the faculty and administration agreed to replace such writers as Homer and Dickens with books like Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*. (pp. 3–4)

As journalist, Kernan claims to be impartial: ". . . it is as fact, not a judgment of what has happened, that they [the "new views"] are here described in as neutral a way as possible" (p. 2). But neutrality is not possible because Kernan's vocabulary is loaded, negatively toned, and overwhelmingly alarmist. Moreover, as prophet, Kernan is anxious to render judgment. It is the affinity of the two roles of journalist and prophet that gives the book its flavor and structure: since both roles appeal to the same vocabulary, Kernan's voice readily slips back and forth between, and blends, the two perspectives.

Kernan's journalistic function feeds his particular prophetic stance as a cultural lamenter who tilts toward, sides with, the pessimists: "Even if Bennett, Hirsch, and Bloom are taken at something less than face value, the widespread interest in their views testifies to a general concern that book culture, of which literature is a central part, is disappearing, and with it many of society's central values" (pp. 4-5). The "many optimists who see a new and better literary system arising phoenixlike from the ashes of the old" are dismissively undercut by withering mock-heroic parody: "This redirection of literature is perceived by its supporters as a giant step for humankind" (p. 5). Kernan's preoccupation is rather with the ashes, as the central image of death in the book's title insists. Death may not be too strong a term to evoke the magnitude of the cultural change we are going through, but Kernan misidentifies its referent. It is not literature that has died, but rather a set of literary critical habits.

Death in this latter sense is exemplified by Kernan's discussion of Norman Mailer (pp. 204–205, 207), who symbolizes the artist's inability to recover from "a crisis of confidence in the traditional values of literature" (p. 3). Even more striking than his selection of Mailer as an index of cultural health is Kernan's refusal to look elsewhere, further afield. Kernan's image of death applies to a limited range of literature that has disappointed him. However, rather than explore new literary territory, Kernan places a self-imposed restriction on the intellectual field he is willing to encompass and gives himself over to mourning. How does Kernan back himself into a corner in which the elegiac mode appears the only palatable option? Why is despair preferable to expanding the range of literary material?

Contrary to Kernan's position, literature is very much alive. But its life has shifted in large measure to emergent minority literatures. The most important and powerful literary experiences I have had during the past decade have come from such writers, to name only an abbreviated short list, as Rita Dove, June Jordan, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Alice Walker; Paula Gunn Allen, Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, Linda Hogan, Leslie Marmon Silko; Joy Kogawa, Yoshiko Uchida. Such writers are now carriers of the values that Kernan cherishes and thinks have disappeared: "the belief in writing and creating art as near sacred callings, the visionary power of the imagination, the perfect form and the truth of the literary text . . ." (p. 203). One reason that Kernan cannot acknowledge the massive shift of cultural energy represented by the extraordinary growth of minority literatures is that this realignment has occurred on a scale not envisioned in the standard formulation of literary tradition given by T.S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and duly cited by Kernan (p. 14). Kernan can neglect major new literary developments only by seeing them as noncanonical, inferior, and incidental. This perception is implied by the ominous, condensed allusion to "less prestigious writings" in the counterpointing of "traditional intellectual qualities represented by the classics of literature versus social values of equality of gender and race represented by less prestigious writings" (p. 4). Or witness the offhand gesture to "writings by blacks and authors of various ethnic origins, not previously considered significant enough to be included in the official literary canon" (p. 86). These phrases are based on a conspicuously unexamined assumption; their claim to validity rests on Kernan's avoidance and ignorance of the literature he classifies as unworthy.

A similar technique of avoidance is apparent in Kernan's treatment of feminism as a critical approach. His repeated references to feminism demonstrate no attempt at scholarly investigation, no pretense of serious acquaintance with different kinds of feminist literary criticism. Instead, Kernan uses the term "feminism" as a code word in expectation of a simple stock response. As Kernan's invocation of the word "positive" three times on his final page (p. 213) indicates, the outcome of feminist criticism is in his view negative: "Give away, lose, or discredit these texts—Homer, Shakespeare, Balzac—and literature is out of business" (p. 212). The basic assumption is that sharply to criticize literature is to empty out and nullify it. I dispute this view. Feminist criticism of Shakespeare, for instance, is both thriving and positive. Feminist critical negotiations with Shakespeare's texts offer not the meretricious exhilaration Kernan alleges, but rather a responsible and culturally vital process of reassessment in the context of a greatly expanded and diversified literary field. However, the positive implications emerge fully only when one is willing to recognize and actively to engage this newly enlarged field.

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Alternate Worlds: A Study of Postmodern Antirealistic American Fiction by John Kuehl. With an Introduction and Interview by James Tuttleton. New York: New York University Press, 1989. Pp. 373. $50.00.

When the American postmodernist novel is taught in other than graduate classes or seminars in postmodernism, the selections tend to have a predictable sameness. Favored works are the short, accessible texts that can readily serve as "samplers" to the contemporary antirealists, arguably our most brilliant, but also irksome group of prose fiction writers. Hesitant to confront the novels by William Gaddis, Thomas Pynchon, and Joseph McElroy that reach nearly one-thousand pages, many readers are left to judge antirealism by the more approachable books like Robert Coover's *Pricksongs and Descants* rather than his full-length *The Public Burning*; Pynchon's short novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, rather than his encyclopedic *Gravity's Rainbow*; Barth's conservative *The End of the Road* and *The Floating Opera* rather than his massive self-reflexive *Letters*; and Gaddis's recent *Carpenter's Gothic* instead of his sprawling *The Recognitions* or his largely auditory novel, *J R*. Reading some of the antirealistic novels is, of course, better than reading none of them; but the assumptions drawn from a few cautious selections produce a partial, and thus slanted, perspective of these formidable works of fiction.

Alternate Worlds is an impressive study that works to enlarge that perspective. Rather than devote each chapter to a specific author, which would have the effect of separating the discussions, Kuehl has organized eleven chapters according to features that recur within a given range of authors and novels. The advantage of this arrangement is twofold. First, Kuehl is able to examine in adequate detail a long list of contemporary novels. A sense of coherence and cohesiveness thus emerges across the postmodernist canon since this format emphasizes similarities among works that might otherwise appear divergent. Second, the arrangement allows for analysis of less read and less known works. Included here are Colman Dowell's *Island People*, Susan Sontag's *Death Kit*, Alexander Theroux's *Darconville's Cat*, and Joseph McElroy's *Hind's Kidnap*.

Kuehl's working definition of antirealism also helps the study to present a balanced and expansive view of the subject. Defining antirealism as "the whole body of nonimitative writing, including earlier domestic instances and an adversarial stance towards what many besides F. R. Leavis consider the great realistic tradition," Kuehl includes, but does not limit his analysis to devices such as self-reflexivity or linguistic play that are most commonly associated with the genre. He examines a span of antirealistic novels, and texts that contain antirealistic qualities, while reaching as far back as Augustan satire and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Although *Alternate Worlds* concentrates on American antirealism since World War II, using "postmodern" to stress its contemporary qualities and distinguish it from Joycean and Proustian Modernism, the study consistently points to the continuity, richness, and international scope of antirealism. Working within that tradition, Kuehl can examine Nathanael West's treatment of the grotesque in *Miss Lonelyhearts* alongside Hawkes's grotesque characters in *The Cannibal* with sidelong glances at Colonial and American Transcendentalist varieties of the literary grotesque. Linking the early examples in this instance to "an artistic mode already prominent

in the Middle Ages," Kuehl contextualizes, and traditionalizes, what often looks to readers to be wildly radical or impenetrable novels.

Kuehl's secondary purpose is to position antirealism on a parallel track with contemporary American realism as practiced by Updike, Styron, Bellow, and Roth. These writers have worked their way with relative ease into a national consciousnesses as well as slipped into a dominant place in the American canon. In the meantime, antirealism has remained submerged in the canon's undercurrents, from where it surfaces intermittently, but more generally keeps to its own metalinguistic, metafictional involutions.

As Kuehl indicates in his Preface, his strategy is essentially *explication de texte*. A critical approach that has been overwhelmed by political, psychological, and numerous other approaches, *explication de texte*—despite questions surrounding the validity of objective, universal standards—is precedential to the other approaches, especially because antirealism is so difficult. Just as Eliot's *The Waste Land* was driven through decades of New Criticism before it would yield to psychobiographical and poststructuralist interpretations, these antirealistic works—which incorporate elements designed to stymie readers (Latin passages printed backwards), to scandalize them (scatological references) and to repel them (misogyny)—require the most essential of critical tasks—to be read, then held up to a variety of critical approaches.

Each of the interior chapters of *Alternate Worlds* centers on a specific formal or rhetorical mode: reflexivity, the ludic impulse, maximalism vs. minimalism, decentralization, the grotesque and diabolical, imaginary landscapes, absurd quests, fictitious history, conspiracy and paranoia, entropy, and nightmare/apocalypse. The chapter on ludic elements, for instance, examines Gilbert Sorrentino's *Splendid-Hôtel* and *Mulligan Stew*, William Gass' *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, and Walter Abish's *Alphabetical Africa*. Kuehl examines the last text for its limiting, though curiously liberating form. Relying on alphabetical order, Abish uses only "a" words in the first chapter, "a" and "b" words in the second, etc., until he reaches the end of the alphabet when he reverses the pattern in subsequent chapters and returns to "A". Also citing strategies structured on games like chess and baseball to experimental typography, the chapter offers a way into the novels of Abish, Gass, Sorrentino, Federman, Coover, Barthelme and Theroux by connecting their strategies and spirit of play.

The arrangement of sections is both traditional and unorthodox. The Introduction of *Alternate Worlds*, nearly sixty pages in length and written by James Tuttleton, traces the development of American antirealism throughout the nineteenth century. Entitled "The American Roots of Contemporary Antirealism," this section often invokes Poe, Irving, and Melville for early examples of postmodernist qualities such as fictitious histories, reflexive designs, and fantastic landscapes. Tuttleton's section, packed with literary/historical information, is an intriguing and useful addition to the book. It reiterates the point that postmodernist devices are not sudden inventions by postwar writers but the creative refashioning of elements previously used, though perhaps less extensively, by earlier writers. Thus, Barthelme's minimalism looks back to the imagist minimalism of Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* as the maximalist impulses in Pynchon's and Gaddis's works recall such massive novels as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Seces-*

sion to Loyalty and, of course, Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Kuehl's interior chapters build from Tuttleton's Introduction, and gradually the differences between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century antirealism emerge. These differences become most emphatic in the final section of *Alternate Worlds*, which is an extended dialogue between Kuehl and Tuttleton.

For the most part, the question/answer format of the last section elucidates two points of view. Drawing *Alternate Worlds* back into the history of the antirealistic narrative, the section pitches the expectations, purpose, and sociopolitical implications of realism and antirealism against each other. The antirealists' enjoyment of gameplaying, for instance, operates through their treating history as fiction and fiction as history while sometimes conjoining both into nightmare or hallucination. The blurring of meaningful distinctions underscores the ambiguous relationship between writer and reader. What inferences do the postmodern antirealists wish their readers to draw? What divides their mock-heroic, anti-institutional, educational, humanistic stance from nihilism? As Tuttleton queries Kuehl, if antirealists disassemble all forms of order to proffer alternate visions that are as violent and oppressive as the "objective" world which they reject, they will gradually lose their readership. Acknowledging the problem of audience and the disturbing preponderance of misogyny, fanaticism, even savagery, Kuehl generally defends these "alternate worlds," which are nevertheless dazzling creations that engage readers in formidable intellectual challenges.

The writers whom Kuehl examines are most often male, and his distinguishing between twentieth-century "masculine" and "feminine" antirealism is a point well taken, one offering provocative areas of investigation for other critics, who often ignore the tradition of women's postmodernism. If writers like West, Hawkes and Burroughs exhibit dislike or deprecating humor towards the functioning of the human body, others like Anaïs Nin, H. D., and Kathy Acker revere or luxuriate in the body, particularly the female body, and often move towards female friendship and community. With the differences between the male and female experimental tradition as complex as those between the realist and antirealist traditions, *Alternate Worlds*, in progressing through a plethora of information, is a stimulating and comprehensive study which poses essential questions that reach across a century of prose fiction in America. The structure, approach, and analyses of *Alternate Worlds* both elucidate and challenge the writers who are its subject.

University of Hawaii Miriam Fuchs

The Mode of Information. Poststructuralism and Social Context by Mark Poster. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pp. 179. $29.95, cloth; $10.95, paper.

The excitement and difficulties that Mark Poster's latest study generates arise from his bold attempt to define "a theory able to decode the linguistic dimension of the new forms of social interaction" occasioned by electronic communication, i.e. the "mode of information" (5), at the core of which he

sees the representative capabilities of language, transformed by diverse realms of communication (the media, data bases, state and corporate surveillance, scientific discourses). Organizing his study around the transformative impact of and on language within these four regions, Poster follows what he calls the "double imperative" (18) of shuttling between, on one hand, particular poststructuralist positions that reveal "the self-referential linguistic mechanisms" at work in the four aforementioned "sectors of electronically mediated communication" and, on the other, these sectors themselves and their subversion of the "authority effects of the poststructuralist position" (18). By linking "sectors" to theoretical positions—TV ads to Baudrillard (chapter 2), databases to Foucault (chapter 3), electronic writing to Derrida (chapter 4), scientific discourse to Lyotard (chapter 5)—, Poster hopes to call attention to the new features of "the contemporary social space," to modes of analyzing it, and to the disruptive potential of the theoretical concepts that his study foregrounds.

A powerful statement mid-way through the book both articulates Poster's understanding of the unique phenomena that the "mode of information" initiates for all language forms, and points to the central inconsistency of his study: by undermining "the time/space coordinates that have been employed to fix language in various contexts," the "mode of information" "opens up an understanding of language and society that has no reference in the grid of Renaissance perspective or the mimetic realism of Enlightenment reason." While both speech and writing "are available to logics of representation," "electronic language, on the contrary, does not lend itself to being so framed. It is everywhere and nowhere, always and never. It is truly material/immaterial" (85). This statement, and others like it, are at once stimulating and disturbing since a project like Poster's, grounding itself in chapter 1 in a strong critique of the misprision of the "totalizing forms of discourse" (notably, Frankfurt School neoMarxism, Daniel Bell, and Habermas) on which postindustrial theories of society rely, would seemingly be adequately self-reflexive to avoid moves toward totalizing its own critical approach. However, just as I appreciate enormously the theoretical breakthrough that Poster attempts, it is often difficult to see how the "mode of information" constitutes any more than another totalizing analytical framework, plugged into the most recent critical discourse, to be sure, but for that all the more unconvincing.

Indeed, it is not clear in some instances how the "mode of information" provides a fundamentally useful vantage point for the critical perspectives that it seeks to open. For example, after detailing in chapter 2 the limitations of various approaches to the study of the "mode of information"'s most unique form, the TV ad, Poster points to Baudrillard's critique of the political economy of the sign and to his later exploration of the destabilizing and simulating effects of communication (the "hyperreal") as contributing to the "mode of information"'s delineation. Yet, to counter what Poster maintains is the "hyperreal"'s totalizing position that "forecloses the possibility of new movements" (66), the "mode of information" would ostensibly provide a crucial understanding of the receiver's dual self-constituting role and decentered position as "subject/object of the message" (67). While Poster's analysis certainly opens up the relationship of viewer to the viewed, particularly to TV

ads, in ways unexplored by previous critical approaches, what advantage this insight might yield for further analysis is left undecided, even undecidable. For the destabilized, active/passive viewer role points to simultaneous and conflicting possibilities in "the media region of the mode of information," on one hand, of extending "the domain of unfreedom by the linguistic constitution of consumer subjects," on the other, of opening "discourse to a new level of freedom by deconstructing all forms of centered subjects" (68).

Moreover, in contrast to the instability of the subject/object of electronically mediated communications is the oddly unitary form of subjectivity exploited by databases and surveillance regimes that emerges in chapter 3. Calling upon Foucault's work on prisons in order better to emphasize the emergent capabilities of the data-based "Superpanopticon" in which we are currently immersed, "a means of controlling masses in the postmodern, post-industrial mode of information" (97), Poster's "uncomfortable discovery" through discourse analysis "that the population participates in its own self-constitution as subjects of the normalizing gaze of the Superpanopticon" (97) is all the more uncomfortable since the destabilized, fractured subject/object of the televisual exchange is nonetheless controlled *en masse*, in totality, by the effective manipulation of the "mode of information" itself. And again, what is gained by Poster's skillful rapprochement between Foucault's analysis and the databased technology if the only "oppositional strategy" proposed to counter the threat of "Superpanoptic" control is Lyotard's plea, "'give the public free access to the memory and data banks'" (98), that Poster finally dismisses as not advancing "very far in the direction of postmodern justice" (154)?

However, in the shuttle diplomacy in chapter 4, between the sector of electronic writing and Derrida's conceptions of writing and context, Poster provides one of the most important readings to date of deconstruction, "extracting it from the context of philosophical and literary texts and reinserting it in the social context of computer writing" so as better to contribute to critical social theory's "reconstructive task of analyzing later twentieth-century society" (110). Unsurprisingly, given the theoretical position under scrutiny, undecidability rears its pixeled head in the form of the decentering effects of computer writing on individual subjectivity, dispersed across bulletin boards and destabilized by new protocols of conferencing networks. Poster concludes that Derrida's concept of "writing" and the anti-logocentric principle that it contains are placed entirely into question by the evanescent marks or traces of computer writing that instantiates "the play deconstruction raises only as a corrective, albeit a fundamental one, against the hubris of logocentrism" (128). Furthermore, Poster extends this insightful analysis in chapter 5 by exploring the question of how to theorize the political in the "mode of information" in relation to scientific discourse. After situating the poststructuralist thinkers in the context of May '68 and its aftermath in order to trace the political directions of the poststructuralist mediation on language, Poster unfortunately provides entirely too little evidence of what he deems suspicious in Deleuze and Guattari's "hermeneutic of desire," and thereby diminishes important insights that *A Thousand Plateaus* might provide for the study of cybernetics. Still, Poster emphasizes more fully the role that language plays in Lyotard's works (particularly, *The Postmodern Condition* and

The Differend) and in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's project, and interrogates the role that science can have when its project has been delegitimized by the critique of "grand narratives" and "when electronic means of generating and disseminating science become available and are practiced" (144). Having located Lyotard's ambivalence towards and cursory treatment of the computerization of science, Poster then undertakes a fascinating, if somewhat brief, reflection on the discursive role of cybernetics in science.

The importance of Poster's book is unmistakable for he skillfully negotiates between and juxtaposes two wide theoretical domains—electronically mediated communications and poststructuralist theory—about which much has been written, but hardly with the acumen that he brings to bear in a long-awaited critical rapprochement. In my remarks, I have meant to engage his work on its own terrain, but there is no doubt that this opening sally into the no longer speculative field of the "mode of information," whatever the contradictions that Poster raises without fully resolving, establishes a fertile ground for further research on the relation of electronically mediated communication to social theory.

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Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film by Robert Stam. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. Pp. xiii + 274. $28.50.

Robert Stam's often brilliant study persuasively demonstrates the usefulness of Bakhtinian theory to contemporary film study and cultural criticism. A number of film scholars have applied Bakhtin's ideas to particular issues in film study: Vivian Sobchack writing on film *noir* or Dana Polan on spectacle are only two critics who have shown the efficacy of Bakhtinian concepts in the practice of film criticism. Stam's book, however, is the first sustained effort to provide theoretical grounding for such practice. At the same time, *Subversive Pleasures* implicitly critiques the dominant parochialism of contemporary film study with the bracing eclecticism of its method. Both for its basic enterprise of installing Bakhtin as a touchstone for film scholars and for its rangy, intellectually restless methodological alternative to the constricting specialization of current film theory, Stam's book is among the most important recent contributions to film study.

These two tendencies of the book are, in fact, closely allied. The appeal of Bakhtin, according to Stam, is that he prefigures crucial elements of poststructural thought, always foregrounding the centrality of language in human interaction, while rejecting the insular qualities of the extreme, separate branches of that thought: Bakhtin's formulations "have the advantage of not restricting liberatory struggle to purely economic or political battles; instead they extend it to the common patrimony of the utterance . . . Discursive relationships, in this perspective, can be deciphered as microhistorical encounters"(8). More specifically, the openness of Bakhtin's categories have the capacity to "deprovincialize a film-critical discourse too often tied to nineteenth-century European conventions of verisimilitude"(9). Thus, the claim of

Bakhtinian theory to turn outward toward dialogue with other theories is reflected in Stam's encyclopedic deployment of the terms of semiotics, psychoanalysis, Marxism. Unlike, say, Kristin Thompson, who at the outset of *Breaking the Glass Armor: NeoFormalist Film Analysis* (1988) specifically rejects the possibility of Formalism's engaging in "dialogue" with psychoanalysis and "materialism" (p. 28), Stam repeatedly insists upon such dialogue among styles of discourse, thereby producing a book that emblematizes the dialogic imagination in the very structure of its argument. Stam's book moves with agility among styles of thinking not to "synthesize" them but to re-think his own position from multiple vantage points. Stam has seemingly read everything and knows how to bring adjacent critical traditions into alliance without forcing one to bow to the others. If this book's immense learning and the way it is marshaled are accorded the attention they should be, the widespread disdain for eclecticism in film study should be finally banished. Only rarely does Stam fall into some of critical pluralism's traps, as when he assigns the too-specific term of another writer to an insufficiently defined context. One of Stam's favorite rhetorical maneuvers, in fact, repeatedly indulges in this tendency: "In the age of what Karen Jaehne calls the 'Great Detumescence . . .'(170); ". . . in the era of what Arthur Kroker calls 'panic sex' . . ."(171); ". . . outside what Stephen Heath calls 'the sexual fix'"(177); ". . . what Meeghan Morris [sic] calls 'the cheerleaders' and the 'prophets of doom,'" (220) and so on, where in each case the needed term is smuggled in a bit too handily. Elsewhere, Stam makes too-easy equivalencies between complex terms, as when he conflates Bakhtin's dialogism with Kristeva's intertext (17). For the most part, though, the book is a model of how to validate theory as a critical activity without pledging allegiance to a *single* theory. If film scholarship is ever to lift itself from the categorical exclusionism in which it is mired, *Subversive Pleasures* should serve as the vanguard.

The book's first two chapters deal with the trope of film language, arguing for the applicability of Bakhtin's work to film by demonstrating the entrenchment of that trope in film theory from Eisenstein to Metz and beyond. As always, however, Stam is concerned with widening the boundaries of particular discourses, de-centering the usual semiotic thrust of such discussions by introducing concepts of "translinguistics" as well as of *difference* and *power*: For Bakhtin, "even consciousness is linguistic, and therefore social, and thus an objective fact and a social force . . . The Bakhtinian conception of language, then, constitutes a vehicle for avoiding the trap of mechanistic economism"(32). One problem with this section of the book is precisely its emphasis on Bakhtin's philosophy of language: I am not unconvinced that translinguistics "allows" the application of Bakhtin's theory to non-novelistic genres, but I wonder why Stam has chosen not to discuss at greater length Bakhtin's theory of genre itself. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin opens up the genre to such an extent that it becomes all-embracing, readily admitting film. (Michael Holquist speaks of "the novel's intensifying anti-generic power" in Bakhtin's work.) At the same time, such an emphasis might have led Stam to come fully to terms with Bakhtin's incipient Formalism, for the traces of which Stam harbors obvious distaste. Still, Bakhtin frequently finds himself on what Stam would call the wrong side of the Formalist distinction between literary and non-literary discourse: "Literary language is a highly

distinctive phenomenon," he claims in *The Dialogic Imagination* (p. 294, where he develops the argument fully). Given this distinction redolent of the Formalist heritage, the question becomes how it problematizes Bakhtin's privileging of the "folk" with their carnivalesque rejections of the *officially* literary.

Stam is certainly aware of all the potential problems in Bakhtin's work, and he deals with this one to his own satisfaction in his introduction (p. 20). The third, fourth, and fifth chapters of the book, less concerned with Bakhtin's theories as such, apply them to such phenomena as the carnival in art-cinema, the marginal status of Latin American film, and porn films. These are the most successful sections of the book, and the vital, deeply affectionate chapter on Brazilian cinema should certainly bring this important "Third Cinema" into the purview of American film study. Stam's Bakhtin is an invigoratingly Utopian figure, unleashing repressed energies, redeeming the marginalized, and triumphantly bridging the "immense gap between left cultural criticism and the people it purports to serve"(238). (Who, I wonder?) If this reading of Bakhtin's multi-vocality leads Stam to some embarrassing excesses—his tinny-sounding and decidedly non-hip effort to appear with-it by congratulating Melvin Van Peebles on his ability to "get down and talk black"(82)—it must also account for the extraordinary power of his commentary on, for example, the Brazilian chanchada. Here Stam explores cultural attitudes that might easily be exoticized, constructed as *Other*, but with Bakhtin's help Stam constructs them as genuinely egalitarian, liberational, Utopian. This section of the book is the most persuasive that Bakhtin's theory can do what Stam claims it can do: *negotiate* difference and transform it into a form of identification.

Moreover, an understanding of Bakhtin's multi-vocality enables Stam to discuss pornography with none of the shrillness, the evangelism, or the true-confessions ardor frequently attendant upon such analysis. Although not comparable in scope to Linda Williams's recent work on pornography, Stam's chapter not only designates some of the crucial features of porn-as-genre, but also tests those theories by pointing to the *simulacra* of them offered by porn: "It is useful to regard porn, I think, as an 'ersatz' or 'degraded' carnival, one that capitalizes on the repressed desire for carnival-style eroticism by serving up the simulacrum of its utopian promise"(169).

This problem of the *uses* of carnival in political contexts is one I am not sure Stam (or Bakhtin) has sufficiently traced. What about texts that mimic features of carnival while legislating against the aims of openness or of liberationism? Stam mentions in passing the Bakhtinian resonances of T. S. Eliot's thought; and in fact, Eliot's work foregrounds parody and popular forms such as the music-hall tradition; it sets multiple textual registers into allusive juxtaposition; its reflexivity is densely ironic; it deals repeatedly with masques and pageants—yet nobody would call Eliot's a "dialogic imagination." Although Stam warns repeatedly against "essentializing" Bakhtin, I can't help feeling there must be some essential attribute—the text's positioning of its own accessibility, perhaps—of the dialogic text, the absence of which makes Eliot's work "authoritative discourse" (Bakhtin's term) in spite of its dialogic surface.

This problem is most troubling in the chapter in which Stam turns his sus-

tained attention to a single text, Woody Allen's *Zelig*. Since Stam emphasizes throughout the book the politically oppositional potential of Bakhtin's ideas, the choice of this text for prolonged analysis seems to me quite odd indeed. Hardly an example of "popular culture," Allen's hectic catalogue of styles is a wan burlesque haunted by High Modernism on the one hand (personified by S. Sontag, I. Howe, S. Bellow) and the art-cinema tradition on the other. Far from being the spontaneous interaction in the spirit of free contact Bakhtin celebrates, the incorporation of these diverse styles is self-consciously tortured and anxiety-ridden, the mirror of Zelig's own "problem." Further, the text is dogged by intense body-hatred: as homophobic as all Allen's films, this one decrees the validity of exactly one sexual practice and regards all others with disgust. Finally, the conception of the populace that emerges from the film is akin to the High Modernist dread of mass culture: Zelig's chameleonic tendencies do not celebrate but *mock* the possibility of negotiating difference and, though to an extent lesser than in *Stardust Memories*, the "carnivals" in which the masses threateningly congregate are marked by their unbending alterity: the Philistines, Allen wants us to know, are at the gates.

My disagreement with Stam here may be a matter of interpretation, but I think it grows from Stam's treatment of tradition as a concept. Although Stam suggests that Bakhtin was not hostile to modernism, as was Georg Lukács, it is still true that the traditions Bakhtin favored are notably premodern. In fact, the one "modernist" Bakhtin devotes some attention to is the same one Lukács was able to tolerate, Thomas Mann. Moreover, Bakhtin's rejection of Formalism may have been tantamount to a critique of modernism because of the deep alliance between Formalism and the cultural avant-garde of the early twentieth-century. If Formalism is designed specifically to deal with the shifting assumptions of literary modernism, are those concepts of Bakhtin's most inimical to Formalism equipped to deal with these assumptions in any way? Stam begins to treat these issues: carnival is "the Bakhtinian category most susceptible to co-optation"(94); "In the modernist period, carnival ceases to be a collective cleansing ritual open to all people and becomes the instrument of a marginalized caste"(98). But to show repeatedly how Buñuel, Wertmuller, Monty Python, Woody Allen and others are part of a "larger" Menippean tradition is at least in part to deny what is decisively modernist in their orientation. All this is only to say that I wish Stam's book, for all its brilliance, and especially given Bakhtin's reticence on the matter, had more fully contextualized Bakhtin's answerability to the polyvalent but autotelic strategies of historical modernism—or their answerability to him.

North Carolina State University James Morrison

Deleuze and Guattari, by Ronald Bogue. New York and London: Routledge, 1989. Pp. 196. $42.50. $16.95 (paper).

I

Many graduate students and established scholars in the human sciences have difficulty with the terminological swirls and the subversion of conventional academic decorum in the two volumes by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the psychoanalyst Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, both subtitled *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Ronald Bogue's *Deleuze and Guattari* attempts to map those swirls and disruptions. Bogue's aim is in part to clarify the extent to which their tactics illustrate rather than obscure their strategy, which may be defined as a radical transvaluation of conventional models of human consciousness, language and culture, as they are applied in philosophy, literary studies, psychoanalysis and politics.

Deleuze and Guattari is an ambitious project, especially when one considers the danger of reduction common to introductory texts, a reduction apparent in other recent introductions that *explain* continental philosophy while following the perhaps necessary Anglo-American analytic bias toward simplicity and clarity that is not shared by the works being described.

Happily, Ronald Bogue succeeds in this exposition of the works of Deleuze and Guattari because he makes good on three claims. First, Bogue insists on the continuity and coherence of Deleuze's early studies of "marginal" Western philosophers and on "minor" literary figures. Bogue then demonstrates that continuity by tracing the genealogy of key terms and concepts from Deleuze's early works to *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus, as if* his philosophy were systematic. In fact, half the book is devoted to Deleuze's early work, and anything that might get lost in Bogue's reconstruction is more than balanced by his accessible exposition of the evolution of concepts addressed in these works, concepts that are often arcane (e.g. Plato's *simulacrum*; the Stoics' incorporeals and bodies; Nietzsche's Eternal Return), and subtle (e.g. nomad; rhizome; body without organs; desiring machines). At the same time, Bogue is careful to emphasize that Deleuze's series of studies, including the collaborative works, must be construed as "works of art. . . . a creative and ongoing production of interconnections, not the revelation of a prevenient whole." If the development of concepts in these works is not systematic, it is perhaps organic, even self-organizing in a rigorous sense not yet understood.

Second, Bogue refuses to underestimate Guattari's contribution to *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Specifically, Bogue finds prominent in these volumes Guattari's clinically as well as theoretically informed theory of group subjectivity, a subjectivity that has "its own laws . . . forms of resistance, transference, fantasy." In other words, Guattari's theory of group subjectivity is a macroscopic formulation, a political unconscious (to which Fredrich Jameson owes much) that may be analyzed through an exploded model of "desiring-production" that draws on (yet completely reformulates in a Nietzschean context) Marxist and Freudian models and terminology. In *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Guattari's theory of group subjectivity is merged with Deleuze's science of becoming, a theory of "what is possible" applied in earlier works not only to Proust's obsession with signs, memory

and the contingency of time, but to Sacher-Masoch's explorations of the limits of desire and the law. This science of becoming has its roots in the *physis* of Nietzsche's affirmative nihilism, a theory of difference rooted in physics, not semiology, a theory of forces articulated through the seminal concepts "will to power" and the "Eternal Return." These concepts are developed first in Deleuze's study *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, and then explored further in a series of imaginative studies of thought, signs, subjectivity and cultural patternings in philosophers and literary figures: Spinoza, Bergson, Proust, Sacher-Masoch, the Stoics, Kant, Kafka, Marx and Freud.

According to Deleuze, Nietzsche's "will to power" determines the relationship between "the active and reactive qualities of force" that involves both discourse and the body, and yet which is independent of force itself. It is "the power of becoming that plays through forces, differentiating them and linking them both spatially and temporally." The active is pure becoming; the reactive functions to constrain, to establish limits on what is active. In human consciousness, the reactive emerges as *ressentiment*; in culture, the reactive assumes all forms of repression, control, management, ideology. Far from being a cyclical theory of history (as with Spengler), The Eternal Return designates a return to becoming and difference, not being and sameness. The Eternal Return affirms the always-already contingency of past and future, as it is reformulated in every present moment: a "world of flux and multiplicity," the Eternal Return" defines becoming as "chance or chaos," which in turn is motivated by the "will to power."

In addition, Bogue discusses at length Deleuze and Guattari's study *Kafka: For a Minor Literature*, in which they apply their Nietzschean theory of the nomad as an aleatory subject in a social field defined as a chaos of desire and contingency, objectified by *simulacra*, and constrained by cultural and psychological machinery. They examine the symptoms of subject and field in Kafka's fictional obsessions with law and desire, with "Oedipal traps and lines of flight." They do so to postulate a positive theory of a "minor literature" that deterritorializes language and deforms cultural and psychological representations.

Third, by situating *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* against Deleuze's evolving philosophical corpus, and against Guattari's clinical and political program, Bogue demonstrates clearly the significance of these two works (particularly the earlier and notorious *Anti-Oedipus*) beyond their historical identification with the Parisian barricades of 1968, an event discussed in the "Introduction." Rather than being concerned with revolution in a Marxist sense, Deleuze and Guattari propose "a politics of creativity" that focuses on the potential of the always-already open cultural system, instead of on an origin enabled by insurrection, or on a completion enabled by a new order of things. In other words, this study will help explain (despite Bogue's claim for Guattari's contribution) why Foucault suggests that, in the field of the human sciences, the Twentieth Century may someday be known as Deleuzian.

Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative volumes engage in a Nietzschean synthesis of the Marxist theory of production, and Freud's theory of the *libido*, in the conflated term "desiring- production." They state that the Oedipal scenario structures desire in capitalist countries, and that psychoanalysis helps to enforce the restrictions imposed by that structure. Also, they agree with

the Marxist formulation that capitalism reduces all human interactions to "commodity relations of universal equivalency." Capitalism therefore "deterritorializes" desire by exploding the limits not only created by the Oedipal scenario, but the limits created by other traditional structures as well. Yet, capitalism also "reterritorializes" desire by forcing it to manifest itself through the network of commodity-relations. While the Oedipal scenario helps to focus human desire through the family, leaving its residue to wander the leveled field of universal equivalency, capitalism also generates "schizophrenic fluxes" of material and human refuse, which is then forced through the Oedipal conduit. Deleuze and Guattari then define clinical schizophrenia as the human refuse (institutionalized or not) in which "Oedipalization has not 'taken'." Their project is to build a psychoanalysis, aesthetics and politics that valorizes the schizo-flux. They provide a schizo-analysis of the multiple cultural machines of desiring- production, and a program for resistance to those machines based on nomadic and rhizomatic thought and action, a theory of subjective contingency and aggregation that explains simultaneously the "rhizomatic" writings of Kafka, jazz performance and even the "events" of John Cage, the multiple human formations of the dance troop *Pilobolus*, as well as the "cells" of the PLO and the "affinity groups" of the Weatherman faction of the SDS.

II

Ronald Bogue's *Deleuze and Guattari* succeeds brilliantly and I have but two reservations with his emphasis. First, *Deleuze and Guattari* weakly represents Deleuze's interest in Bergson's elaboration of Nietzsche's "science of becoming" in human psychology, physics and biology. Through such works as *Matter and Memory, Duration and Simultaneity* and *Creative Evolution*, Bergson's discussion of contingent duration, memory and *élan vital* had seminal influence on Deleuze's study of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (as well as on Proust himself), Deleuze's studies on cinema, as well as his formulations of processes mainly identified with Nietzsche's concept of the nomad. This interest may be examined in Deleuze's own study, entitled *Bergsonism*, which gets scant attention in *Deleuze and Guattari*. This work not only remains as influential in Bergson scholarship as *Nietzsche and Philosophy* has been with Nietzsche scholars, but would also help illuminate what Bogue explains with otherwise great success. Deleuze draws on Bergson's theory of memory, duration and *élan vital* to conceive of the ways in which multiple experiences of contingent duration—and of the contingent nature of invented models of past and future with reference to pure duration—play in the fields of simulacra that constitute culture. These fields are governed by the "will to power" and the Eternal Return; and Deleuze and Guattari's method helps to dissolve distinctions among the disciplines, and distinctions among the categories that distinguish those disciplines: signs, thoughts, concepts, institutions as subjectivities, and so forth. While Gillian Rose, in her work *The Dialectics of Nihilism*, argues dismissively that Deleuze's philosophy is metaphysical and should be called "the new Bergsonism," she has intuited an important genealogy that begins with Boltzmann's Order Principle from ther-

modynamics and emerges in attempts to construct correspondences between physics and cultural processes, the most successful formulation of which has been information theory.

My second reservation thus concerns how Bogue draws out then drops hints of a crucial drama that begins with Deleuze's fascination with Nietzsche's obsession on a *physis* of difference and of becoming. A theory of correspondences between nature on the one hand and consciousness and culture formation on the other that Nietzsche (and Bogue) describe largely in the terminology of dynamics (a physics of forces), this *physis* seems instead to draw on what Ilya Prigogine has argued as the ideologically opposed discourses of dynamics and thermodynamics, one emphasizing precision, geometry and the reversibility of time, the other emphasizing statistical formulations, biological processes and the irreversibility of time. (Deleuze and Prigogine quote each other's works on a number of occasions, by the way.) Since a reversible model of time requires a static, regulated duration represented (for example, in calculus) as an infinite series of still frames of discrete moments framed by a geometry of space-time interstices, it is hard to account for the ways in which Nietzsche's fascination with the "will to power" and the "Eternal Return" fits into such a dynamics, unless one identifies the reactive machinery of *ressentiment* with dynamics, a machinery that attempts to control the contingencies of duration. In other words, Nietzsche's eternal return, as a science of becoming, *is* Bergson's concept of contingent duration, which *is* Prigogine's arrow of time underlying all systems, dynamic and thermodynamic. The question is, what do we make of Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari and Prigogine's attempt to construct correspondences between the laws of physics and the laws of consciousness and culture?

Needless to say, these two reservations merely indicate my *reaction* to Bogue's book, the limits to a powerfully useful introduction to Deleuze and Guattari. Perhaps they suggest directions for further research. Except for these reservations, Ronald Bogue's *Deleuze and Guattari* is a good read indeed.

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Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989. Pp. xxi + 394. 1 photo. $53.95.

In a critical age defined by the fashionable shibboleths of negativity, uncertainty, self-consciousness, contradiction, différance, and insufficiency it is entirely appropriate that a volume articulating the "play of negativity" appear. Published as the third in Columbia University's *Irvine Studies in the Humanities* with Robert Folkenflik as general editor, this important work collects fifteen essays along with a lucid introduction under the general assumption that "[w]hat allows the unsayable to speak is the undoing of the spoken through negativity. Since the spoken is doubled by what remains silent, undoing the spoken gives voice to the inherent silence which itself helps sta-

bilize what the spoken is meant to mean" (xvii). The result of extensive consultations between its contributors that culminated in a conference led by the co-editors in June of 1986 at the Institute for Advanced Studies of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the final achievement is impressive: a provocative and heterogeneous display of the breadth of scholarship on negativity along with a convincing demonstration of the extent to which unsayability and negativity are embedded historically and ideologically in Occidental literary discourse.

The collection is divided into three parts: (1) "Unsaying," in which the philosophical groundwork is laid through studies of negative theology, Heidegger, Adorno, and Beckett; (2) "Proliferating," in which the more specific literary applications of negativity are pursued in essays on modern poetry, Celan, Blake, Faulkner, medieval allegory, George Eliot, and the "tradition" that links Homer and Virgil to Dryden and Pope; (3) "Performing," in which negation and textual play are studied, first by Wolfgang Iser's more theoretical essay on "The Play of the Text" and then by Stanley Cavell, who puts negative play into practice by examining the "melodrama of the unknown woman" (340) in "Naughty Orators: Negation of Voice in *Gaslight*."

The introductory remarks on "Modes of Negativity" suggest that

> *negativity*, or some equivalent means of eschewing indicative terminology, becomes inevitable when we consider the implications, omissions, or cancellations that are necessarily part of any writing or speaking. These lacunae indicate that practically all formulations (written or spoken) contain a tacit dimension, so that each manifest text has a kind of latent double . . . this inherent doubling in language defies verbalization. It forms the written and unwritable—unsaid and unsayable—base of the utterance. But it does not therefore negate the formulations of the text or saying. Rather it conditions them through blanks and negations. (xii)

Though the co-editors' introductory remarks posit distinctions between the concepts of negation, negativity, and nothingness (xii–xiii), the distinctions remain, perhaps deliberately so, hazy. For example, on the one hand we are told that "[i]n its undetermined proliferation, *negativity* speaks for something that is arguably as real as anything else we know, even if it can be located only by carving out a void within what is being said" (xi) while, on the other we are told somewhat paradoxically that the "operations [of negativity] . . . can never be equated with nothing, nothingness, or denial, or with the aims of avoiding or nullifying" (xiii).

We are also told that "negation . . . must be distinguished from negativity" (xii) without a sufficient elaboration of that important distinction, or a sufficient definition of "negation." In Budick's essay "Tradition in the Space of Negativity," as part of a discussion of apostrophe and negativity in Homer and Virgil and their translations by Dryden and Pope, there is a reiteration of a rather loose distinction between negation and negativity (taken from Iser's *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*):

> Blanks and negations increase the density of fictional texts, for the omissions and cancellations indicate that practically all the formula-

> tions of the text refer to an unformulated background, and so the formulated text has a kind of unformulated double. This 'double' we . . . call negativity. (317)

Similar as it is to a previously cited passage, one wonders about the unwritten nature of these "[b]lanks and negations" as they are intended in the context of the volume. On the one hand, negativity seems a "means of eschewing indicative terminology," a function that seems more properly attributable to "negation," whereas, on the other hand, negativity is not a means but rather an "unformulated background" doubling the "formulated text." The problems that inhere in Budick's and Iser's theoretical discourse about the unsaid are significant for how they initiate further questions about the resonant silences and omissions that give depth to discourse, the "forms of things unknown" which the "poet's pen / Turns . . . to shapes . . . [giving] aery nothing / A local habitation and a name" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.i. 15–17). Certainly, the questions asked by Pierre Macherey seem pertinent here (as does his rather puzzling omission from the substance of these essays): "in order to say anything, there are certain *things which must not be said* . . . Silences shape all speech . . . Can we say that this silence [sic] is hidden? What is it? A condition of existence—point of departure, methodical beginning—essential foundation—ideal culmination—absolute origin which lends meaning to the endeavour? Means or form of connection" (*A Theory of Literary Production* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, 85])? The theoretical framework behind the use of the term "negation" would seem to require a similar reevaluation to determine what constitutes a "negation" and what relationship "negation" has to the "unformulated double" that is the negativity immanent in a text.

Along the same lines is the suggestion made by the editors that "negativity not only shows that it is not negative, since it constantly lures absence into presence. While continually subverting that presence, negativity, in fact, changes it into a carrier of absence of which we would not otherwise know anything" (xiv). The paradox of a negativity that is "not negative" suggests that negativity entails an interplay between the "negative" and the "not negative." Such an interplay raises ontological, epistemological, not to mention linguistic questions about experience as it is expressed in language: Is language not so much what it says but what it fails to say, avoids saying, or frames as unsayable? How can we know and define the silent otherness that inheres in language? How can language and therefore literature express their unsayability while continuing to sustain meaning? The implicit thesis that language is most evocative, most meaningful, most plentiful and multivalent, at the point at which it unsays and gives vent to the inexpressible through the "play of negativity" is a challenge which readers of this volume cannot avoid. The criticisms raised here point to the need for a critical debate on issues relating to negativity and do not detract from this book as a significant attempt to formulate and apply a theoretical framework to understanding the play of negativity and unsayability in discourse.

The lengthy lead essay, "How to Avoid Speaking" (originally published as "Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations" in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* [Paris: Galilée, 1987]) by Jacques Derrida shows the myriad connections between

mystic and theoretical practices that affirm the paradoxical presence of the negative. The essay provisionally supposes "that negative theology consists of considering that every predicative language is inadequate to the essence, in truth to the hyperessentiality (the being beyond Being) of God; consequently, only a negative 'apophatic' attribution can claim to approach God, and to prepare us for a silent intuition of God" (4). Invoking Plato, Pseudo Dionysius, Meister Eckhart, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Jean-Luc Marion, Derrida's essay reinscribes Wittgenstein's seminal notions (from the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*): "6.522—The inexpressible, indeed exists. *It shows itself;* it is the mystical" and "7.—Concerning that about which one cannot speak, one must remain silent" (11).

For Derrida, the obligation ("one must") to remain silent is reinscribed "into the order or the promise of a 'one must speak,' 'one must—not avoid speaking'; or rather 'it is necessary (*il faut*) that there be a trace.' No, 'it is necessary that there *have been* a trace,' a sentence that one must simultaneously turn toward a past *and* toward a future that are as yet unpresentable" (11–12). The "play of negativity" occurs at this imprecise juncture between speaking and unspeaking, sound and silence, past and future. Literature and its criticism entail a "tracing" of the conjunction between what is affirmed and what is negated, what is spoken (expressible) and what is left unspoken (inexpressible), if one is to remember the past (by its unspoken traces embedded in what *is* spoken) and create a future (by the necessity to speak and thereby anticipate the trace of the unspoken).

The density of the argument, as is typical with Derrida, confronts the reader's capacity to formulate speech as well as to remain silent, recognizing all the while that "consciousness . . . [is] that place in which is retained the singular power not to *say* what one knows, to keep a secret in the form of representation" (17). Derrida ends in the interrogative mode in which he begins, by asking "If there were a purely pure experience of prayer, would one need religion and affirmative or negative theologies? Would one need a supplement of prayer? But if there were no supplement, if quotation did not bend prayer, if prayer did not bend, if it did not submit to writing, would a theiology be possible? Would a theology be possible" (62)? Negation and silence define the point at which speech ends and the hypostatic idea of a "purely pure experience of prayer" begins. Thus their "presence" leads, perhaps, to the possibility of prayer, theology, and God. Certainly, the admixture of Derrida's thought with Christian and Neoplatonic negative theology makes for a particularly evocative beginning to the collection; the essay deftly surveys the difficult terrain of apophatic thought while proleptically formulating the "place" of speech that is not speech in the (im)possibility of theology.

The essays following Derrida's are no less challenging. Mercifully they avoid the all-too-frequent blight that falls upon such collections in which authors refuse to acknowledge the intertextual context of their essays. Thus, Frank Kermode's essay on "Endings, Continued" in which he attempts an "updating" of *The Sense of an Ending* also reflects on Derrida's beginnings by reinscribing Derrida: "one must think of the *khora* [Platonic 'place'] as Dionysius thought of the good: as the formless which confers form. It is in this respect that it seems to resemble the *place* to which negative theology hopes to

be directed by prayer as it passes through the wilderness of discourse" (77). In the same inter-reflective mode Kermode comments on Derrida's use of aposiopoesis, the rhetorical figure in which "the speaker comes to a sudden halt, as if unwilling or unable to proceed, though something not expressed must be understood" (OED): "you can use it . . . to draw attention to the actual predicament of the speaker, hindered by the very processes of his own thought from moving on, from saying what comes next . . . [it] substitutes silence for speech" (89–90). That silence is the nothingness (or doubling) of speech raises the spectre "of the relation of ontological Nothingness to Being" (95) and the "possibility or impossibility of saying anything about that Being" (95). Gabriel Motzkin's essay, "Heidegger's Transcendent Nothing," reflects on these ideas while Gerald L. Bruns's essay, "Disappeared: Heidegger and the Emancipation of Language," considers Heidegger's by now commonplace notion (stated in "Das Wesen der Sprache") that "'the essential nature of language flatly refuses to put itself in words—in the language, that is, in which we make statements about language' . . . So when language speaks it does not do so (if we can imagine this) by means of language" (137).

Jonathan Culler's essay "On the Negativity of Modern Poetry: Friedrich, Baudelaire, and the Critical Tradition," begins with Hugo Friedrich's assumption that modern poetry is rife with negative categories including "[d]eformation, depersonalization, obscurity, dehumanization, incongruency, dissonance and empty ideality" (189). Culler takes the use of such categories, and especially depersonalization, to be "reductive" in that they "empty the lyric of everything except the movement of consciousness" thus "contribut[ing] to an ideology of lyric and of self that systematically recuperates negativity" (197). The problem for Culler, then, is that such categories "produce a general model which obscures the aspects of the poems that resist the typical modes of recuperation" (197). Culler, assiduously takes to task Bruns's notion (expressed in *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language*) that "the work becomes silence, everything in it neutralized" (206) because of its "powerful appeal to the consolations of the negative" (206). Negative categories can lead to "radical eliminations" (206), repressions, and totalizations that require further consideration for how they affect the critical process. This suggestion, coming as it does more or less at the centre of the book, alerts readers to the reductive dangers inherent in any discourse that claims the capacity to recuperate and inscribe the negative. Clearly Budick and Iser have not avoided dissension and difference within the collection and for this they are to be praised.

Perhaps this volume's principal contribution to scholarship is its implicit suggestion that the unsayable and negativity are central to an emergent reevaluation of the Western intellectual tradition, a reevaluation that posits silence, nothingness, voicelessness, negation, and inexpressibility as implicated in the pursuit (and deconstruction) of the rational. The most convincing evidence of this pursuit's vast historical and ideological persistence lies in the number of critics, poets and philosophers who are not (or only cursorily) mentioned in the volume, yet whose contributions to our awareness of the negative and the unsayable have been substantial: Pascal, Donne, Rochester, Shakespeare, Sanches, Freud, Sartre, Valéry, Kenneth Burke, Rosalie Colie, Macherey, Barthes, Nishida Kitaro, to mention only a few. Though the volume's focus is on Western thought it neglects significant crossovers to East-

ern thought, especially as related to Japanese Zen philosophy and Eastern ontotheologies in which the formless and the unsayable figure significantly (a lack filled in part by Robert E. Carter, ed., *God, the Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western* [New York: Paragon House, 1990]).

In a volume as diverse and rich as this it is perhaps unfair to point to what it fails to do. However, the absences must be noted as being almost equally resonant in the "play of negativity" that is this book. Certainly, as has just been suggested, an essay connecting elements of relevant Eastern philosophical thought to Western literary and critical practice would have been useful in enlarging the book's already substantial scope. The book also avoids direct confrontation with problems relating to the political nature and implications of unsaying and negativity: to what extent does the predilection for modes of negativity and unsaying function as a means to obscure or enhance the political elements that figure in discourse? That tropes of inexpressibility and negativity have political uses in both literary and critical contexts is a fact that the book does not address sufficiently, especially given its genesis in Jerusalem (and especially given the substantial space it devotes—two essays—to Heidegger).

Perhaps the most tantalizing section of the book in what it promises to say but leaves unsaid is the third on "Play" with its two highly suggestive essays by Iser and Cavell. The sense of negativity and unsayability as elements in the performative function of language and expression, part, if you will, of their musical nature (yet another aspect of textual unsaying that is not addressed head-on), seems an important aspect of the discourse of negativity for, as Iser suggests, "[b]y allowing us to have absence as presence, play turns out to be a means whereby we may extend ourselves" (338). Negativity and unsaying create opportunities for self-extension and for the illusion of a presence that is inviolable (because it is unsaid). This notion is echoed by Cavell's suggestion that "[b]oth excess and emptiness express the human wish to escape the human—the desire for the inhuman, or the demonic" (364) and leads to the larger questions of excess, emptiness, and the play of negativity as related to why we read (and write) literature and criticism. Implicit in the relationship between criticism and literature is the idea that critical unsaying "gives voice to [an] inherent silence" that can not otherwise be filled. That the "negative capability" of criticism may be said to "stabilize what the spoken is meant to mean" is one of the abiding myths which this book furthers, perhaps at the expense of understanding negativity as a disruptive force pointing to the unspoken void beyond and implicit within the text's origins in the unspoken silence of the blank page. That the book ends with these provocations to further thought, evoking the unsayable resonances that inhere in Cavell's use of the image of "gaslight," is part of a clever design that suggests how much is left unsaid, and how resonant that unsaying remains.

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