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BOOK REVIEWS

Milton, Poet of Duality by R. A. Shoaf. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. Pp. 224. \$17.00.

Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. Pp. 370. \$32.50.

These two recent books on Milton ought, one feels, to be more different from one another than they are. Lewalski's professes to be written from a perspective appreciative of, if not indeed one with, that of Renaissance literary theory. Shoaf's, by contrast, is informed by modern theory, especially semiotics, and is therefore offering to be something rather new. Yet both proceed by displacing properly formal or stylistic into moral considerations, as if (abstract, putatively Christian) morality furnished poetry with its obvious end. Many of the same dull neoChristian prejudices for which William Empson castigated establishment Miltonists twenty-five years ago crop up yet again, and solemnly subsist if they cannot be said to thrive, in these books' mildly depressing pages.

Yet one must always make distinctions, and Lewalski's book does have major virtues. Her central proposition is that Milton in *Paradise Lost* deliberately deploys the whole gamut of forms comprising the loose and fluid hierarchy that was the Renaissance genre system: "epic, tragedy, sonnet, verse epistle, funeral elegy, hymn, epigram, and many more." She holds that Milton invokes and practices this mixed and shifting, yet determinate system in order indirectly to inform and comment upon his Biblical material, judging this system and discriminating among its various forms even as it allows him to evaluate the elements of the sacred story.

These propositions are certainly well worth arguing. It is unfortunate, then, that Lewalski does not so much argue her case as *document* it. Since it is "deliberateness" that needs to be shown, Lewalski ought to stress and think upon the indications of conscious manipulation, those explicit textual signals by which the genre system is made for the course of *Paradise Lost* into a rhetoric. Lewalski does underscore obvious generic cues; but all too often, she assumes that the presence of a generic paradigm, or the presence of some element that might be associated with a paradigm, constitute evidence of Milton's deliberate use of form. This assumption having been made, the question then can easily become, "to what end this deliberate use of form?", and an argument about generic composition and "style" gives way to an—impressively indefatigable—exercise in moralizing Milton.

This procedure is especially unsatisfactory when the moralizing argument clearly dictates the very documentation of genre, as it does for example in Lewalski's analysis of Milton's God. She begins with the general statement that God is the most generically multiplicitous character in the poem, and then makes this claim good in practice by broadening her definition of genre to the bursting point. One can accept that the dialogue between Father and Son in Book III is "a species of epic *Concilia Deorum*," and that this cues us to the dialogue's essential generic paradigm. But one cannot agree that the Son's offer to die for fallen man is romance because it recalls "deeds of brav-

ery and self-sacrifice inspired by erotic love and noble friendship." Why reach outside the epic for analogies to such an action? Again, the dialogue of Father and Son does indeed allude to a scene between Apollo and Phaethon in Ovid, as Lewalski points out; but an *allusion* to Ovid does not make Milton's poem metamorphic epic at this point. Lewalski goes on to argue that the Father-Son exchange is (among other things) tragicomedy (!), forensic debate (a *formal* genre, she tells us), and finally "a species of Socratic dialogue." The doors of Lewalski's learned perception are thrown open, and it is festival time; if he were likened to a lamb in this section, then that would not only put the Son within the Revelations-genre, it would also make the poem georgic. Lewalski is considerably more accommodating than God is, and the reason is not far to seek. She wants to impart a slightly new twist to the old argument about God's proper unrepresentability: God's generic multiplicity, she tells us, reminds the reader that he cannot really be imagined, but only approximated to. The argument about Milton's deliberate use of genre here runs athwart Milton's evident intentions—which should be apparent to anyone familiar with his peculiarly literalist doctrine of accommodation, according to which it would be heretical and arrogant to distrust the anthropomorphic self-representations that God, in the Bible, has supplied to his saints. This theory accounts for what is in fact the comparative nakedness of Milton's God in *Paradise Lost*. Lewalski dresses God up, one feels, in order to cover over Milton's radical and presumptuous familiarity with him, and in order to salvage a more coherent reading than the poem makes available.

More important, however, than any individual misreadings induced by it, the procedure that turns a generic into a moralizing argument prevents Lewalski from even raising the question as to how a *rhetoric* of genres is possible. The concept of such a rhetoric is as much a problem as it is a solution. Say that Milton does manipulate genre to such coherent ends as Lewalski proposes; the peculiar and salutary *distance from genre* that this manipulation is premised upon still asks to be accounted for. If one regrets Lewalski's turn to moral exegesis, that is largely because her learning puts her in a better position than most to exposit the preconditions, and thus to explain the nature, of Milton's generic practice.

In spite of lapses in the documentary argument, however, and in spite of the impropriety of the documentary slant, Lewalski's basic proposition is pretty well enforced. She does make a fairly strong case for the determinate presence and the deliberate manipulation in Milton's poem of the genre-system associated with and most influentially put forward by the younger Scaliger. Even though she argues that Milton is operating strictly in terms of, or within, the Renaissance system, her book thus nonetheless raises the question of how to relate Milton's indubitable *return* to the classics, and to classical epic—which takes place against and behind the back, so to speak, of the official system—with the Renaissance system itself. One may not be able to see Milton, at least in practice, making the Renaissance mistake of interpreting the Aristotelian *hamartia* as a character flaw or a sin (a mistake that Lewalski, who should know better, evidently repeats); still, Lewalski makes it more pressing to ask how Milton's avoidance of such an error was possible, and that is no inconsiderable accomplishment.

It is less easy to come to terms with Shoaf's *Milton, Poet of Duality*, partly,

it should be granted, because he is attempting something fairly new and strange, at least to Milton criticism. The book concerns numbers (one and two especially), numerical puns ("impart," "impair," "atone," *et. al.*), and numerically related words ("sign," "justify") in Milton's major poetry—a cluster that Shoaf calls the "lexicon of duality." Shoaf draws eclectically upon elements of psychoanalytic and semiotic theory to fashion this numerical diction into a moral discourse centered upon true and false forms of identity. Milton's theology is thus translated into a curious species of numerological morality—curious mostly because of the emphasis on numbers, but also because this morality proves to have served Dante, Virgil, Plato (though against his will), Ovid, Chaucer, and other immortal Western artists before being refined under Shoaf's pen for all varieties of modern humanity (some groups may possibly have favored access, however; see p. 56, where Shoaf exonerates himself from the charge of making language Christian by claiming "only that Christ perfectly understood language—its vicariousness or mutuality or sacrificiality—and this, in large part, because he was a Jew").

The essential moral propositions would seem to run as follows. If one wants to be whole or really one (and one does), then one should recognize that one needs help from another. If one recognizes this, then one will become part of a couple of some sort (whether this means a coupling of one and language, one and a wife, or one and God or Christ). One must join with another, must recognize one's duality, must make two, in order to be truly one, which is also then to be *ordered*, at least in relation to the second. Truly to recognize one's duality and be one and ordered always involves sacrifice (of one's independence, which is evidently presupposed). So unity is attained only through sacrifice. If one does not sacrifice, or sacrifices falsely, then . . . but I begin to feel that it is impossible to summarize this argument without seeming willfully to parody it, so I will let Shoaf teach false sacrifice, or sin, in his own words, which are taken from a reading of Sin's speech to Satan toward the end of Book II of *Paradise Lost*:

Sin (who is followed by a sign) is a mirror for Satan and his (and everyman's) narcissism. Sin is thus properly defined as a corruption of difference, or, very strictly speaking, of apartness Through the imagery of narcissism, Milton is recognizing that sin is the illusion and confusion in which one attempts to be one without ever becoming two or different from itself, merely copying itself endlessly instead. (And this, if we stop to reflect on it, is precisely pride, the chief of sins and hence the loneliest.) Sin is always a frustration of difference: in the sin of lust, for example, the difference of the other's body is only an illusion to the lustful, for the lustful wants the other's body *as* his or her own and reduces it to his or her own, thereby confusing it with his or her own.

The problem with such a passage, and with Shoaf's reading of Milton, is not just that the morality extracted is so general that it can be of little relevance to Milton in particular. Nor is it only that the modern theory alluded to is almost always used to gloss the content, rather than to explain the form, of Milton's poem. The bigger problem is that the extreme emphasis upon num-

bers is properly meaningless. The modern sources from whom Shoaf pulls his number theory (Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze, *et al.*) do speak of numbers, it's true; but in them the numbers are articulated with categories or concepts that give them a significance they otherwise don't know. Shoaf would seem to want to turn the relationship between numbers and more substantive concepts around, with results that I believe are unintentionally comic (one imagines Milton deliberating on whether to have his eldest read to him in Latin again this morning: "If I do it, will we both remain one, and thus three? or will I be making us into a false duality—just one?") Better, surely, that the theology go untranslated and un glossed than that it should be submitted to such ill-informed modern wisdom.

Though I think Shoaf's project is seriously misguided, I would not be taken to imply that criticism informed by Lacan or Deleuze or Eco ought not to be directed at Milton. It is just that a cognizant Lacanian analysis, for example, should approach Milton in a rather different way, making an explanation of his poetry's ideology and form its object and end, instead of seeking to gloss it with Lacanian truths (equating Christ's sacrifice, say, with the repression imposed by the subject's entrance into the Symbolic).

Neither would I leave this book behind without noting that it is strong in places. Shoaf's argument for Ovid as an influential reference point even for the later Milton provides an interesting sidelight, and his relation of individual Ovidian myths (Medea, Philomela) to *Paradise Lost* is insightful. Again, the last chapter, on *Samson Agonistes*, offers a remarkably acute reading of that tragedy's action, the category of the dual serving here—accidentally, but usefully—to underscore the play's ambivalent relation to classical tragedy, and thus to define its singularity as a form. And finally, to note a virtue that is not incidental but rather central to the book's purpose: while one may have doubts about the moral discourse Shoaf implicates his "lexicon" in, still he does demonstrate, I think, that many of these words (e.g., "partner," "impart," "impair") are complex words; or, more precisely, that though they are not exactly puns, they possess a punning dimension—they might be called semipuns. Shoaf's moralizing explanation of Milton's frequent use of the semipun, in his chapter on rhymes and puns, is clearly inadequate; but a more extensive documentation and bolder explanatory analysis of this characteristic Miltonic figure might yield interesting results.

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American Romanticism and the Marketplace by Michael T. Gilmore. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985. Pp. ix + 177. \$19.95.

American romanticism, as a major episode in our literary history, invites re-reading and re-writing in light of recent developments in critical theory. New texts, such as John Irwin's *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (1980) and Carolyn Porter's reading of Emerson in *Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams and Faulkner* (1981), challenge the

domination exercised by works like F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1942) and Charles Feidelson's *Symbolism and American Literature* (1953), which have stood so long as fundamental articulations of the period. Specifically, conceptions of the oppositions between spirit/matter, culture/nature, self/other, life/death, use/exchange value—components of the symbolic, psychological and economic systems that are implicated in romantic aesthetic theory and practice—invite reexamination. With his *American Romanticism and the Marketplace*, Michael Gilmore joins those attempting alternative constructions.

Gilmore opens his book with the assertion that "The American romantic period was the era of the marketplace" (p. 1)—an hypothesis which asks us to see the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville in terms of the commodification of literature, and to reconsider commonplace notions of mid-nineteenth century American literary culture as decidedly anti-materialist, a view that defers marketplace issues to the latter half of century. He points out that the production of a national literature and a market society, based upon exchange rather than use, are interrelated features exerting profound influences on the themes and forms of American romantic literature. Writing and publishing were both implicated in this economic revolution, one effect of which was to transform literary production from "an upper-class or patrician pursuit," (p. 3) practiced and consumed by a small audience of like-minded individuals, into an effort to engage a literate mass market readership (Gilmore reminds us that in 1850, ninety percent of the white adult population in America could read and write). Literature was commodified and merchandised to engage this reading public.

Gilmore wants to add the transition to an exchange economy to the list of causes for the tensions and polarities inhabiting American romantic literature. He claims that, in their major works, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville display their ambivalence about the writer's place in the new economic order, and struggle, not too successfully, with the need to accommodate the demands of the new reading public. He argues that Hawthorne and Melville, fully implicated in the market economy, "eventually succumbed to the commodifying process. They came to see their readers as adversaries and their books as alienated objects" (p. 17).

One could say, however, that their concerns with and accommodations to the marketplace position them, on the one hand, closer to their supposed opposites and rivals—those women writers who succeeded in producing works for a mass culture audience, or, through their resistance to the reading public, on the other hand, closer to the patrician upper class elite. Unfortunately this potentially informative fracture between elite culture and writing is largely unexamined, remaining a part of the story of American romanticism that Gilmore refuses to re-write. Instead, he tightly circumscribes his field of investigation and fixes the canonical writers of Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* at the center. Invoking the common cliché of the "other," the shadowy specter of the "scribbling woman" inscribed in the margins of nineteenth century literary culture, he maintains that "the romantics can be excused for feeling that they inhabited a completely separate cultural universe from the 'scribbling women.' They had reason to excoriate a literary marketplace that proved so inhospitable to their art" (p. 8). The conventional view,

that "Art" or "Great Literature" is defined oppositionally, by the absence of market value, stands as an unexamined and controlling assumption.

Still, there are provocative moments in *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* that will return readers to Gilmore's book. His thesis, more than the specific readings he offers, could lead us to construct new relationships between texts of the period (these and others), between writers and language, as well as between literature and economic structure. As it is, the book is slight. It provokes and frustrates more than it persuades us to revise traditional readings. Further, it is uneven: Gilmore works best with Thoreau and Melville, but much less effectively with Emerson and Hawthorne.

The treatment of *Walden* as a modernist text that denounces modernity, a "defeated text" of agrarian ideals, illustrates the vitality of Gilmore's approach. Pointing out the similarities between Thoreau's critique of the commodification of nature through exchange and Marx's critique of capitalism with its attendant reification of human social relations, Gilmore sees *Walden* as a chronicle of Thoreau's inability to liberate himself completely from the exchange relations of the marketplace. According to Gilmore, Thoreau is keenly conscious of the relationship between the commodification of objects in the marketplace and the commodification of language as symbol. Thoreau wants "to devise a conception of reading and writing as unalienated labor" (p. 45), outside the exchange process. The writer and reader are laborers, producers rather than consumers of the text, again in opposition to the writers and readers of popular literature. What is the relationship between the democratization of the literary audience and the commodification of literary works? To telling one's story and to selling it? What is the writerly text of art as compared with the readerly text of popular literature in mid-nineteenth century America?

This returns once more to my earlier complaint: the unexamined politics of literary production in Gilmore's work. His notes suggest some of the sources one might consult: Marx, Lukács, Althusser, Benjamin and Barthes. The language of his analysis, the terms he uses, suggests the coming together of new analytical approaches and often read texts, but Gilmore gives us just enough of this to disappoint. Of *Moby-Dick*, for example, he writes: "The living speech of the storyteller vies with 'the death of the author,' resulting in the disappearance of the first-person voice from whole stretches of the narrative. Moreover, the first-person speaker is himself a more guarded and elusive figure than his air of sociability suggests. . . . In asking to be called Ishmael, he comes before the reader not 'in his own proper character' but under a Biblical pseudonym that expresses his sense of alienation" (p. 126). Here the evocation of Benjamin ("The Storyteller") and Barthes ("The Death of the Author") confuses rather than clarifies. The references remain buzz words, "imports" not so easily transplanted in the eclectic context of Gilmore's work. The traces of their relation to a specific, "other" discourse of contemporary criticism suggest a difference which troubles and unsettles this text.

Gilmore tends to make less rather than more of his observations. Exploring the question of "authorial removal" in Melville, he present an author who wants "to orphan the text, to sunder it from an identifiable parent or producer" (p. 126) as a means of obscuring his complicity in the market economy. The points are not implausible; rather, they are not quite enough. He writes,

for example, "Moby-Dick is 'The Doubloon' writ large . . . an object without a single, originating maker" (p. 128). He notes that "one has no sense that Ishmael—or indeed, anyone—has written these pages; lacking a mediating point of view, they produce the illusion of a text without an author" (p. 128). Of interest is the illusion, not the absence. The strains of the opposition—accommodation to marketplace interests and resistance in the form of loyalty to one's art/self—are traced out but never become a productive tension.

Without doubt this vein is a rich one, worth mining. How Ahab, in his contest with Moby-Dick, aligns himself with Emerson by attempting "to overcome alienation and reclaim the world for man" (p. 116) is perhaps less interesting than how Melville aligns himself with Thoreau by constructing a modernist text in which the seams (semes?) are made visible and the reader is invited to become a producer. The whale is constructed through many discourses—"scientific, mythological, legal, historical, religious, political, and literary" (p. 127), but it is the property of none. By eluding the systematic and comprehensive representational claim of a given discourse, it invites our own construction which, at the same time, we are forced to (re)cognize as always only another such discursive figure. If Gilmore had read his Melville back to Thoreau, to the anti-modernist modernist text of *Walden*, he might have escaped the traditional view of these texts as they are held captive in the familiar predetermining structures of an unquestioned literary historical progression.

Because Gilmore is so eager to see authorial tension in terms of simple resistance, his controlling view of these writers' ambivalence resolves the texts' complexities. Having mastered Hawthorne's disappearing act, Melville in *The Confidence-Man* epitomizes the technique of "orphaning the text," this time by detaching language "from the speaking subject": "The multiple con men of Melville's novel are versions of the artist who tell stories to obtain money and use language, not to communicate truth, but to obfuscate their motives and ingratiate themselves with listeners" (p. 150). What does Melville accomplish through such an elaborate de-centering textual strategy? Certainly it involves more than the simple, predictable reaction to the commodification of art that Gilmore presents: that by "removing" oneself from the text, the writer may engage the marketplace without compromising his artistry. Having prepared the ground for analysis, Gilmore gives us a brief paragraph on the "thematic or psychological correlatives" of the device of apparent "authorlessness." What does it mean to see "Bartleby, the Scrivener" as "an investigation into the narrative's own unintelligibility to the reader" (p. 132)? Or to say that Melville "positions himself . . . as an absence, an inscrutable blank wall. He disavows the possibility of a personal author-audience relation, taking the alienation of the working class as a figure for his own estrangement from the public" (p. 145)? Melville's choice to align himself with the elite guard through op/position to the democratized reading public (never really materialized in Gilmore's text) remains an unexamined feature of the tensions under consideration. And this "Truth" that the True Artist would tell in the sanctuary of his invisible heart of hearts remains another controlling but unexplored mythos in Gilmore's version of American romanticism. It frees him to claim in his "Afterword" that "American romanticism yields up this final judgment by the writer in his confrontation with the mar-

ketplace: a literature exchangeable for dollars is a literature not of intimacy but of revulsion" (p. 152). Thus he closes his work with a statement masquerading as a question: "Is it unreasonable to suppose, then, that the perdurability of the masked and difficult works of American romanticism is itself a testimony to the power of the market?" (p. 153).

Not every critical work invites the kind of complaint I have been making. That is, there is a sense in which it is not fair to ask critics to employ some other approach to their subject than the one they select. Still, Gilmore tries to get it both ways. He uses just enough post-structuralist terminology to tease us into expecting something other than what he provides. By tracing the infiltration of marketplace desires for success and money, Gilmore implicitly, though perhaps unwittingly, blurs the ease with which readers and writers assert the conventional wisdom of the opposition: there is high, elite art (literature) and there is popular, commercially successful writing (not literature, not art). This age-old polarity, along with its troublesome distinctions between writer and reader, artist and popularizer, producer and consumer, remains unshaken. I am asking for more rather than less ambiguity—the kind that might result from an interrogation of the received oppositions hallowed by the literary historical tradition or an investigation of the position of each work in its own literary relations of production. Otherwise, the contradictions Gilmore wants us to see as irresolvable remain pre-settled by how the literary historical tradition has already written American romanticism and its texts.

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In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy, by William Patrick Day. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. Pp. xi + 208. \$17.50.

There is much to recommend William Patrick Day's study of the Gothic romance. Day's perceptions are usually bright and persuasive, his readings of individual texts are often insightful, and his style tends to be crisp and clear. *In the Circles of Fear and Desire* thus makes an interesting, entertaining contribution to the growing stock of studies of Gothic fantasy.

Following Northrop Frye's lead in *The Secular Scripture* and operating as an archetypal critic, Day defines the conventions of the Gothic canon clearly and intelligently. There is not much in this approach that can't be found in the studies of Gothic by David Punter, Judith Wilt, Elizabeth MacAndrews, and a number of other critics, but Day's account is a good one. Operating at the same time as a Freudian critic, Day provides one of the better accounts of the psychodynamics of Gothic fantasy, although here again his ideas are not always new. Day concentrates on questions of androgyny, sexual identity, and sado-masochism; he has less to say about at least one Freudian category—the uncanny—which has been much cited by other analysts of Gothic (see, for example, Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*). Day mentions Freud's concept, identifies it with what he calls "the Gothic effect," but does not pursue the issue. Nor does he move beyond Freud to, among other

recent theorists, Jacques Lacan, whose ideas of language and self, symbolism, the Other, and the mirror stage might be particularly useful for analyzing such a voyeuristic, mirror-conscious genre as Gothic. Day's most interesting psychoanalytic insights concern the androgynous nature of character "doubles" and the quest for—or disintegration of—sexual identity. From this perspective, his readings of *The Monk*, "Carmilla," and *Dracula* are especially compelling.

Day cites Carolyn Heilbrun on literary androgyny and also an essay by Nina Auerbach, but not her *Woman and the Demon*. I am not sure that he has taken full account of recent studies of Victorian sexuality, several of which—in common with Auerbach's book—challenge conventional notions of the Victorians as particularly repressed, neurotic, or infantile about their "sexual identities." Day also cites Lawrence Stone and Anthony Wohl, but not Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks, Vern Bullough, Rosalind Coward, or Peter Gay, among others.

Partly for these reasons, Day's attempts to operate not just as an archetypal-Freudian critic, but also as a cultural historian, are less than compelling. Sometimes he seems to believe that he is writing history when he is only repeating one of his psychodynamic theses in historicized language. It may be true that "the underlying story of the Gothic is . . . the story of the imaginative life of the middle class in the nineteenth century" (p. 4), but this is virtually a tautology. The same statement could be made about the realistic novel, or about any of the other products of "middle class" artists and writers in the nineteenth century. Relations between Gothic romances and other "popular" literary forms such as Newgate fiction, the "sensation novels" of the 1860s, and detective fiction are more asserted than explored historically.

The *history* which Day tries to write gets even cloudier when he proceeds to offer a sketchy account of the Gothic in the twentieth century, ranging from *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises* (which contain Gothic touches, but of course aren't Gothic romances) to such films as *King Kong* and *Halloween*. The notion that the Gothic romance had some peculiar hold on the sexually repressed Victorian imagination (even though the genre was an eighteenth-century and then a Romantic invention) now balloons into the *perhaps* sexually liberated (Day supposes not), hip-about-Freud "modernist" era. But if the foundation of Gothic is the problematic nature of sexual identity, how can the popularity of Gothic fantasies in three or four distinct eras, when sexuality and family relations were perhaps quite distinct, be explained in historical terms? How do the psychodynamic properties of Gothic fantasies change, or do they? How can Day's archetypal and Freudian categories account for the quite specific historical popularity of certain Gothic romances, but not others? Why does *Frankenstein* still live in the popular imagination, but not *Uncle Silas*? Or, giving Hollywood its Gothic due, why has *King Kong* been such a mass culture "hit," while such an excellent Gothic film as *The Other*, based on the Thomas Tryon novel, has dropped from sight?

In fairness to Day, the problem of writing a *history* of Gothic fantasy is a complicated one. Day's archetypal-Freudian categories are themselves ahistorical, so that any critic starting from such a perspective will not find it easy to operate as a historian. Further, the Gothic romance itself abuses or ignores norms of historical accuracy and probability. It thus isn't surprising that there

haven't been many very good historical explanations of its popularity (David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* is perhaps the one recent exception). But there are several interesting biographical-historical explanations for particular Gothic romances, and these might serve as at least beginning points for a history. Day cites Kate Ellis's essay in *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, and some of the other essays in that volume are part of what I have in mind. I am thinking also of Fredric Jameson on "magical narratives" and on Conrad in *The Political Unconscious*, Terry Eagleton and Gilbert and Gubar on the Brontës, Carol Senf on *Dracula* and "the New Woman" in *Victorian Studies* (26: 33-49), and Ed Block's "James Sully, Evolutionist Psychology, and Late Victorian Gothic Fiction" in the same journal (*VS* 25: 443-67). These essays may not provide completely satisfactory historical accounts of their subjects, but their authors are asking the right questions.

In the Circles of Fear and Desire is, then, a mix of critical and historical ideas, ranging from the sharp and original to the fuzzy and repetitious. There are some inaccuracies, which perhaps correspond to Day's occasional haste to overgeneralize (Uncle Silas's son, for example, and not Silas kills "Madame" in Le Fanu's novel, and her name is not "Rougerrie" but "de la Rougierre"). At the same time, there are numerous astute, often witty critical perceptions and analyses of individual texts which make the book enjoyable. Like much psychological and archetypal criticism, Day's study leaves a good deal to be desired as history, but is still worth reading for anyone interested in Gothic fantasy.

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The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James by John Carlos Rowe. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. Pp. xv + 288. \$24.00

Henry James: Fiction As History edited by Ian F. A. Bell. London: Vision Press, 1985. Pp. 188. \$27.50.

The two books under review reflect the change in recent criticism: the return of history from its long exile during the successive reigns of the New Criticism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. The emphasis on the social embeddedness of all modes of discourse in specific political, economic, and cultural formations has imparted an uncanny quality to the current moment. The return of the repressed has not only made familiar authors unfamiliar, but has also prompted new allegiances in critics previously committed to the old regime. Whereas in the 70s floating signifiers and absent centers commanded attention, now it is their genealogy as productions of discursive practices and their status in the rhetoric of cultural representation that are likely to be examined. In short, Derrida is displaced by Foucault, *Glyph* by *Representations*.

Literature's great formalists present the richest and uncanniest opportunities for revisionism, and few major figures have been so frequently defamiliarized of late as Henry James. "To render uncanny the high modernist

Henry James" is John Carlos Rowe's avowed intention, and he aims to do so by "socializing" the novelist "whose destiny always seems to end in the intricacies of his late style and its retreat from life into the palace of art" (p. 28). Rowe's "antiformalist enterprise" seeks to transform the "essentially subjective, interpersonal, and intrinsic issues of James's fiction into the sociohistorical questions that, even as they exceed the literary text's formal boundaries, are the proper ends of literature" (p. 25). Rowe conceives his book as a critical reading of American deconstruction, a method he finds vitiated by its tendency to make a "too simple and too strict distinction" between literature and society, a binary opposition dear to the New Criticism and to the "romantic mythology" of modern art in general (pp. 120-121). Since his previous works established him as a well-known proponent of Derridean deconstruction, Rowe's current emphasis is not without its irony. His Foucaultian stress here on the "power struggles of language, history, and culture" hopes to widen deconstruction's scope so to achieve the important aim of socializing James.

Although these aims are sufficiently ambitious to sustain a book, they constitute only part of Rowe's project, whose larger goal is to read James's "theoretical potential": the novelist is "used as a point of reference" for evaluating various contemporary theoretical approaches—feminism, marxism, the psychology of influence, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and reader-response criticism. In six chapters (one for each item on his list) he deconstructs each of these methods while insisting that his deconstruction is "critical and productive," "coordinating" different approaches rather than eliminating them as do most American deconstructors in their aggressive exclusion of the values and concepts of predecessors and competitors. The determining of a "certain limitation, which requires the perspective of a supplementary hermeneutic" describes Rowe's "narrative mobility," as "a subsequent strategy of interpretation . . . becomes the subject and method of the subsequent chapter" (pp. 256, 24).

The main problem with this exceedingly busy and self-conscious book is that, as Rowe conceives them, his twin efforts at socializing James and evaluating theory are at cross purposes. The effect of this confusion is that James and history are diminished, a double reduction nowhere more egregious than at the conclusion of chapter one. Here Rowe inadvertently makes clear why he can't make good on his abundant talk of opening up the sociohistorical, political, and social dimensions of James. This goal is unrealized because James's primary role in the book, as Rowe blithely confesses, is to serve as the "manikin on which the drapery of contemporary theory will be modeled and where problems of fit will be confronted by this latter-day deconstructive tailor" (p. 28). Immediately prior to this ominous image, which borrows Henry Adams' manikin, Rowe the tailor had severely cropped the fabric of history: "The 'history' with which we are concerned in this book is our own recent history in the humanities." The succeeding chapters are hampered by the conflicting and attenuated aims delineated in the first. Yet it is a tribute to Rowe's acuteness as a close reader of James that his book manages to be as valuable as it is, despite its inability to surpass the formalism it denounces.

If his methodological experiment is problematic, Rowe's local readings, particularly of *The Bostonians*, "The Turn of the Screw," and *The Princess*

Casamassima are provocative. His analysis of this last text illustrates both the strengths and problems of the book as a whole. Although the chapter on "The Marxist Critique of Modernism and *The Princess Casamassima*" seeks to carry his argument "fully into the social domain," here, as elsewhere, the "social domain" turns out to be confined to the level of literary form, which is shown to enact, through narrative strategies, political and social themes. Rowe's socializing of James is a wholly literary activity with little or no attempt to connect his texts to the web of intellectual and cultural affiliations that partly comprise the novelist's historical moment. Instead, Rowe's energy is spent in socializing James in terms of Fredric Jameson's formulations regarding the ideology of form. What makes this chapter interesting, however, is not the application of Jameson's formal typologies, but rather Rowe's challenge to Jameson's "caricature" of James as the "exemplar of formalism" and decadent aestheticism, whose perspectivist realism makes him a mystified celebrant of the ideology of individualism (pp. 159, 164). This Marxist mythology of James can be criticized from a number of viewpoints, and not surprisingly Rowe conducts a formal reading to demonstrate that James's realism is hardly the self-evident and unproblematic mode that Jameson takes it to be. By creating a "disturbance within the customary narrative of realism," James deconstructs the ideology of form that governs realism, and his novel exposes "throughout that such 'realism' depends upon the effective repression of contradictions. . . . The formal structure of the novel is the representation of such contradicton" (p. 186). The virtue of Rowe's reading is that it shows us James neither as defensive aesthete nor political conservative but rather an adept critic of the "subtle arts of ideological mystification." James's "intimate understanding" of the complexities of cultural self-representation is rooted in what Rowe calls the "profoundly radical depths in his own political thinking" (p. 187), a striking insight that Rowe barely develops. And yet, James's radicalism is precisely what needs to be clarified, specified, and historicized if Rowe is genuinely to accomplish his goal of "questioning the ways in which James has been mythologized as the master of a life-denying aestheticism" (p. 28).

This goal, I think, remains the most crucial one to pursue in James studies, despite the fact that recent work, including Ian Bell's collection *Henry James: Fiction as History*, has put a political inflection on familiar Jamesian themes and techniques. The politicizing of James (by Carolyn Porter, J. C. Agnew, and Mark Seltzer, among others) has had a paradoxical effect: while it has served the useful purpose of breaking "the seal of historical solipsism and idiosyncrasy surrounding him" (in Agnew's phrase), it has also reaffirmed James as antipolitical. Whether guided by Lukács, Marx, or Foucault, recent historical readings end up resembling Jameson's image of James the conservative elitist. Bell's anthology exemplifies this paradox to the point of sabotaging its advertised aim of refuting the conventional wisdom that believes in the "negativity of James' own politics." Although Bell's preface claims that his collection will show James's oeuvre as demonstrating "exactly the opposite of such supposed negativity," the essays by Millicent Bell, Nicola Bradbury, and Maud Ellman blatantly allegorize James and thus dehistoricize him. The one essay in the volume that manages persuasively to ground James directly in the material circumstances of his time is Stuart Culver's

study of the Prefaces and their relation to James's increasingly professionalized sense of authorship based on a new model "engendered by copyright statutes and the changing technologies of the literary marketplace" (p. 135). The most ambitious piece in the collection, Richard Godden's "Some Slight Shifts in the Manner of the Novel of Manners," is, for all its flair, most interesting as evidence of the inability of Marxists to locate James in any critical relation to his age. Godden endorses John Goode's claim of twenty years ago that James is "saturated in the values of capitalism; in its metaphysical notions of a substantial self," and attempts to substantiate this with the same dubious evidence Goode has used—James's letter to Grace Norton urging her to "be as solid and dense as you can." Goode and Godden pounce on this as proof of James's allegiance to an atomized bourgeois ego; they completely ignore that in consoling a grieving woman, James went on to say: "we all live together . . . we help each other . . . we lighten the effort of others . . . make it possible for others to live." That James's letter suggests a notion of self both monadic and fluid is less contradictory than indicative of James's fundamental belief in the self as an intersubjective process that depends on Otherness to constitute its own identity. Godden's claim that the "disintegral self has no appeal to James" (p. 179) ignores that James values "the saving virtue of vagueness," which has no investment in the bourgeois ideals of stability and sincerity, and ignores too how often James dramatizes the calamities that engulf those who conceive themselves authentic and autonomous. Far from supporting the "integrative selfhood" of leisure class manners (Godden's terms), James offers a powerfully dialectical critique of the bourgeois subject, for he affirms a limited and precarious freedom by showing that the individual's capacity for creative expression is inextricable from his alienated status in the object world of capitalist social relations. Godden sees none of these complexities, and prefers to conclude with the familiar verdict: James's "defense of the 'solid' and 'dense' is a form of self-defense, indicating how narrow is his affiliation to one moment of capital and to the uses made of that moment and of that capital by a particular leisure class" (p. 180). But the narrowness is all Godden's. In 1904 this allegedly leisure class snob immerses himself in New York's "dense Yiddish quarter" and visits Ellis Island where he recognizes and accepts "the affirmed claim of the alien" as the image of his own alien identity as "restored absentee." James and the immigrant confront the "assimilative force" of what he calls the "hotel spirit" of modern democracy. In his year long repatriation James encounters and analyzes a "thousand forms of this ubiquitous American" spirit, whose hegemony Max Weber would describe a year later as the "iron cage" of instrumentality and rationalization in which dwells; "the spirit of capitalism."

As Bells' volume attests, the image of James the genteel formalist persists, a caricature as durable as any in American literary history dating back to Charles Beard, Parrington, and Van Wyck Brooks in the twenties and thirties, revived in Maxwell Geismar's hysterical diatribe of the sixties, and continued by Jameson and others in the eighties. Rowe's energetic if unsatisfying effort to chip away at this well-entrenched mythology is a step in the right direction. The next step might be simpler than Rowe's intricate methodological machinery would permit: to reread the book that remains among the most penetrating works of American social and cultural analysis yet written—*The*

American Scene. However improbable it may seem, in this report of his 1904 visit to America, James takes his place with two of the great social theorists of the late nineteenth century—Georg Simmel and Max Weber—and anticipates two of the crucial theorists of the next century—Marcuse and Adorno. Confronting this underappreciated work and the constellation of which it is part might begin to measure the “radical depths” of this uncanny genius.

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Modernism and Authority: Strategies of Legitimation in Flaubert and Conrad by Mark Conroy. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. Pp. ix + 193. \$20.00.

Coercion to Speak: Conrad's Poetics of Dialogue by Aaron Fogel. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. Pp. 284. \$29.50.

Both Mark Conroy's *Modernism and authority: Strategies of Legitimation in Flaubert and Conrad* and Aaron Fogel's *Coercion to Speak: Conrad's Poetics of Dialogue* are major, original studies of Conrad and the theory of fictional narrative generally. Conroy argues that Flaubert and Conrad found themselves in a legitimative quandary, like their emergent middle class readers in the nineteenth-century. The writer could appeal to his actual audience, the reading public, or to a “higher” tribunal such as posterity or a select band of other artists as the chosen few who will judge his work. The rage for legitimation comes from an Oedipal lack of proper paternity, which is the source of legitimation, prohibition, and guilt. The infant's claim to be heard, its first legitimative cries, embodies the contradiction between expression and repression, appeals to the code transmitted by parental authority, and puts the child in the role of usurper, having to justify itself to its parents and through them to larger society. The act of speech defines the eccentric position of the speaker toward the code. The language-giving father occupies the space of authority and judgment. The child exists in some other space, an alien. The code applies both to intelligibility and to behavior, for example as Conrad's Marlow is the understander of Kurtz's tale and also embodies a standard of conduct. Language is a structure of domination. One of the most effective methods of legitimating such a structure is to appeal to tradition, but nineteenth century democratic movements opened all traditional values to constant reassessment and disputation. Basing his argument on the work of Jurgen Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer, Conroy maintains that Flaubert and Conrad demonstrate the need of the whole nineteenth-century to “revivify fatherhood as a metaphor for the new, more impersonal structures of authority of the time” (p. 27), which links together the micropolitical situation of each novelist and the macropolitics of the nineteenth-century generally. The completely deracinated authors, Flaubert and Conrad, needed to legitimate their utterances in the fatherless genre, the novel. Conrad's creation of a storyteller and his dramatic audience within his texts is a nostalgic appeal to a time when the sense of the community was stronger and the storyteller

had his proper seat at the hearth, rather than merely an alien commercial writer appealing to an anonymous reading public. Conrad's plots, too, often express his need to "personify, and so humanize, an impersonal and pitiless process [of imperial rule as well as creative writing] and to retrieve patriarchal authority to justify one's powers" (p. 91)—in *Lord Jim*, *Nostramo*, *Heart of Darkness*.

Like Conroy, Fogel occupies himself with the motives and impulses moving the author to the act of writing. Fogel, too, sees Conrad as an heir of Oedipus. He sees the key to Sophocles' drama to be the punishment inflicted upon the speech forcer. He speculates that an Athenian audience would see in the play the dramatic embodiment in Oedipus of the judicial power of coercion to speak and that the legitimacy of that power is proved when it recoils on the speech forcer. The "secular logos" of the play is "legal institutional power to make the other talk and bear witness to the community" (p. 227). The uncanny parallel between the speech forcing sphinx and Oedipus is reflected in many everyday situations in real life—judges in court, teachers in the classroom, parents addressing children, a Freudian analyst interrogating a patient, and so on. It is a central situation, Fogel would argue the central situation, in Conrad's fiction. For example, consider the interrogation under torture of Hirsch by Sotillo in *Nostramo*. The Oedipal dialogue creates a ritual in which the hidden agenda is the destruction of the inquisitor, as in the transcripts of the McCarthy hearings, the opening of *King Lear*, Kafka's *Trial*, or when Derrida sees a text analyzing and interrogating itself until it bursts like an empty bubble. The dominant humanist assumption in modern Europe has been that dialogue must be free, unforced, democratic, to be liberating. Fogel denies this view for Conrad, stating "that to be 'human' is not to be free in dialogue, as in Renaissance and modern 'humanism,' but to be immersed either in a *polis* or in an imperial tangle of polities, and therefore to be caught in multiple forms of dialogue as coercion" (p. 232). Conrad's fictions are built, according to Fogel, out of scenes dramatizing disproportional and coerced dialogue such as filibuster, yarn, inquisition, abnormal silence, overhearing, and operatic ensembles. Typically such scenes in Conrad display a structure based on his sense of motion or rhythm, which Fogel characterizes as "rest, unrest, arrest." Fogel borrows from Mikhail Bakhtin the term *anacrisis* for these scenes of forcing another to speak.

When critics focus on the author's motives, his intention, or the whim that generates his language, it is not surprising that their explanations sometimes appear whimsical. The reader of the critic may well wonder what sort of verification is appropriate to the kinds of assertions being made here. What rules, if any, should be brought to critical books of this kind to test the truth content of their arguments? In Fogel, for example, the concept of "chime" is very important so that the word *must* (that is, to be compelled to some act) chimes with the word *muster* (to muster the crew). Like the text of a contemporary "language poet" or the lists of etymologically connected words in Gerard Manley Hopkins' notebooks, chimed connections seem to indicate subliminal connections in the author's mind dictating to some degree his lexical selection and the structure of his scenes. Onomastic practices, like those employed when Dickens names his pedagogue "Gradgrind," reflect such connections. What is the reader to make, however, of assertions like the following: "The

name Lingard means, to Conrad's overhearing of English, lingering guardianship . . . No matter that the name was real: Conrad gives it an allegorically contractual meaning: colonialism is lingering guardianship" (p. 45). Grant that the name Lingard "means" lingering guardian and a plausible, coherent reading emerges. Lena means "leaner" or a dependent person (p. 134). Heyst means in German "to be named" (p. 144). A highly gymnastic onomastic produces a commodity, a critical text, fit for consumption by an academic audience. But, similarly to Kurtz in Africa, is there not some danger from a lack of restraint in such a reader? Why not read *Lingard* backwards and find in *drag nil* (Latin *nil* or *nihil* being an example of the sort of polysemic polyglossia noted by Fogel) the true "meaning" of the fiction. Lingard is shown as a man who drags nothing with him, neither dependents nor cultural history, a totally alienated hero finally. Giddy with this formulation (which is nowhere suggested by Fogel and is presented here merely as a comic *reductio*), the reader may go on to read the name *Nostramo* backwards as *O! mort son*, again reflecting in reverse the action of the novel, where *Nostramo* is killed in the final scenes by his potential father-in-law and so is properly lamented as the dead son. It would make the joke tedious to continue this plausibly Oedipal analysis. The serious issue here is what kind of verification critical arguments require.

On first reading of Fogel's book, it appears full of sparkling suggestions and insights, but overbold in its claims and necessarily merely speculative. On one level, it certainly is a demonstration of what it argues: that all dialogue is caught in disproportionate power networks and replays the interrogation of Teiresias by Oedipus. The book comes to us with the authority of a university press and an academic system, which is the very system compelling us to reply, to counter, to feint as we read. On another level, the book makes assertions about Conrad's meaning which seem to be "accidental," implausible, unacceptable, rather like Stan Fish's turning the last names of Kenyon College's English faculty into an ingenious metaphysical poem. What kind of proof can be adduced to show that some local Episcopal spirit of Gambier has not ordained that onomastic poesy? Yet my intuition is very strong that Stan Fish has gone too far here and that Fogel's "lingering guardian" is also somehow unreasonable.

Since my intuition seems to *contradict* Fogel's assertion about the "meaning" of Lingard, there must be a *distinction* somewhere lacking in our dialogue. I suspect that the missing distinction which makes our disagreement possible resides in the word "meaning" as quoted above (p. 45) or, for example, when Fogel refers to the "invoice" for ivory sent downstream by Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*: "The polysemous word *Invoice* here means something roughly equivalent to 'inscape' in Hopkins, but the force is more political and moral. Marlow from this point onward goes mad with 'Invoice' as the world is mad with 'Ivory'" (p. 57). In such an assertion the abrasion between Fogel and his reader becomes acute. What actually does Hopkins mean by "inscape"? Is the in- formation of "inscape" parallel with that of "invoice"? Does "invoice" really "chime" with "ivory"? A host of such questions seems to be generated out of the turbulent encounter of reader with Fogel's text and they seem to demand some sort of procedure of verification. What kind of evidence needs to be adduced to answer such questions and restore a harmonious balance between reader and text?

No one these days imagines "meaning" in spatial metaphors, to be contained in language as water is contained in a glass in definite amount, shape, and quality. On the other hand, many readers will find it disturbing to be told that "invoice" means something like "inner voice" and probably even more disturbing to be blandly confronted with Hopkins' "inscape" as having a commonly agreed upon meaning providing the basis for a clear understanding of its correlative meaning in Conrad's "invoice." Why is there this feeling of disturbance or turbulence in running through Fogel's criticism? Perhaps when Fogel says that A "means" B, the word "mean" should be broken into several distinct concepts. "Means" in Fogel apparently means: (1) suggests to me on a purely personal and private basis; (2) will suggest to all educated, English, middle-class readers today; (3) ought to suggest to all educated, English, middle-class readers today; (4) once might have suggested to educated, English, middle-class readers at the turn of this century; and so on. I will readily grant that "Lingard" means "lingering guardian" under heading (1) above, provided Fogel will allow me under the same heading to let "Lingard" mean "drag nil." But, of course, heading (1) leads to the modernist solipsism of language in which no communication from one private world to another is possible. The dialogue between Fogel's printed book and my response implies that we are seeking a common ground of understanding, under something like heading (3) above. He *wants* us to understand the meaning his way. My volition does not always coincide with his. A community of interest requires us to agree on certain procedures and conventions necessary for arriving at agreed, verifiable understandings of texts. It appears likely that a printed page is a stimulating code to which every reader brings a set of mental screens and protocols allowing him or her to generate meaning. Meaning is not a static entity, but a dynamic relation created by the action of each mind on the code. Each mind will carry somewhat different screens and so produce a range of private meanings, but the restraints of social life require that each reader struggle to find the common, the agreeable procedure for creating meaning. For example, we agree to read from left to right in English as a pragmatic way to produce meaning from the code, and so it is merely ludicrous to do the opposite and turn "Lingard" into "grad nil" and "Nostromo" into "O! mort son." Likewise, when we read a text there is an ongoing process which opens and closes possibilities. When we read "ling," the next letters might be "ering," but when we read "linga" we know that the possibility of "lingering" must be rejected. Fogel appears to me to be talking about reading a text in the light of *excluded* possibilities. It is likely that many readers in fact will go through the process of excluding the word "lingering" when they read "Lingard" letter by letter from left to right and that some trace of that exclusion will color the next steps in the process of their developing meaning from the code, but this procedure of exclusion is not the same as determining the static and permanent normative meaning of a text claimed in Fogel's mode of analysis.

Both of these works should be read by all serious students of Conrad and of modern literary theory. Both show great ingenuity. Although their total arguments are too complex to be adequately summarized in a short review, they open the question of how meaning is mapped onto a text and how a work of fiction can be related to the real situation of author and of audience.

Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst, and Lawrence by Margot Norris. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. Pp. xii + 265. \$26.50.

Beasts of the Modern Imagination must certainly be a good book, since, although it starts from premises that I find distasteful and regard as untenable, it still manages to include much material that I am obliged to admit is interesting. The book veers back and forth between the scholarly and the autobiographical modes, perhaps in the laudable ambition of making criticism more personal and less formal, or, perhaps, merely in order to prove, in standard Derridean fashion, that the formal cannot be detached from the personal. Whether it carries out these various *manoeuvres* tactfully or gracefully is something for the individual reader to decide, but it is certainly a learned book. The decision whether there can be such a thing as an "autotelic" art (e.g., p. 12, 80, 99), or an art that can dispense with meaning (pp. 17, 169, 222-223, 225), is perhaps also a reflection of the school of criticism to which one belongs rather than a matter for dispassionate (sic) discussion. In any case, the author confesses that she has fallen short of her own ideal, the ideal of the autotelic and the meaningless: she confides in the reader, touchingly, that the objective which eluded her "most fully was the invention of a bestial 'voice' or 'style.'" (p. 196). No doubt the book would have been very different had she succeeded: nevertheless, the fact remains that the first beast has yet to write the first book on "ferity."

The chapters I liked best were those devoted to Darwin, Nietzsche, and Ernst, but the Ernst chapter is valuable for its qualities as standard art criticism rather than for its demonstration of any particular "bestiality" on Ernst's part. The Kafka chapters seemed merely to invert the common idealist interpretation of that author. The content of the Lawrence and Hemingway chapters appeared largely self-evident; the Lawrence chapter did little to identify the special beauty of Lawrence's style, still unnamed.

After the "Introduction: The Biocentric Tradition," Prof. Norris goes on to a sympathetic account of "Darwin's Reading of Nature." In this chapter there might have been more acknowledgment that Darwin did have predecessors in the recognition of man's mechanical and animal functions, predecessors such as La Mettrie, or even La Rochefoucauld. In the following chapter, "Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, and the Problem of Mimesis," the author might also have acknowledged (p. 55) Schiller's primacy over Nietzsche in the argument that life is marked by opulence and waste, profligacy rather than penury. This chapter does, however, contain a valuable analysis of imitation, as well as of the role of the audience (cf. p. 135). The first part of Chapter 4, "Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*: Behold the Beast" provides a useful account of Nietzsche's critique of Darwin; the second part has abundant gusto and empathy for the chapter's stated subject. Nietzsche reveals himself as the actor behind his various masks, "one who 'acts' spontaneously, like a participant in a festival, rather than mimetically. And he restores to his *mise en scène* the fugitive light, wind, and temperature that eluded even the Impressionists" (p. 98).

In Chapter 5, "The Fate of the Human Animal in Kafka's Fiction," Norris denies that asceticism represents a positive value for Kafka. In relation to

"The Hunger Artist," she offers a striking selection of the grotesque passages about food "that dot Kafka's personal writings" (p. 116). The thesis of the second Kafka chapter, on "Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk," seems to be that in his last work Kafka "outwits his defiant readership by writing a narrative that consumes itself in the telling" (p. 118). Norris introduces a lovely quotation from Nietzsche that could almost be out of Kafka himself. "The human may well ask the animal one day, 'Why do you not talk to me of your bliss and only look at me?' The animal really wants to answer and say: 'It comes of always forgetting right away what I wanted to say.' But it forgot even this answer and was mute: so that the human could only wonder" (p. 119). On the whole, though, Norris's attempt in this chapter to force Kafka's position towards "radical animality" (p. 125) seems to me even more pointless than the opposite strategy.

The next chapter is concerned with Max Ernst's "philosophical dismantling of form" (pp. 143, 149). It contains very good analyses of "La Femme 100 têtes" (p. 146) and "Une Semaine de bonté" (e.g., p. 164). It has interesting things to say about the difference between the roles of temporality and identity in literature and in the visual arts (p. 148), and points out Ernst's curiosity about Hopi civilization (p. 149). There seems to be a potential contradiction, though, between the assertion that Ernst restores the "libidinal matter" to art (p. 149), and the observation that he is not really a primitivist but, rather, "decadent" (see p. 153 as well as p. 159).

I find little that refreshes Lawrence for me in chapter 8, or Hemingway in chapter 9. Norris's criticism of Hemingway rests on the contention that what is important to Hemingway is not violence itself, but the representation of violence (p. 219). On the other hand, why Hemingway ought to have felt an obligation to luxuriate in real violence is not clear to me either; nor do I understand why Professor Norris should find it necessary to suppress her own pity for animals (p. 195), any more than I understand why she should feel guilty about having failed to *invent* (her own word) a "bestial 'voice'" for herself (p. 196).

The "Conclusion: The Biocentric Tradition in Context" recovers some interesting themes from the earlier parts of the book, particularly the attack on metaphor (p. 224; cf., for instance, p. 84), and attempts a synoptic comparison of biocentric with anthropocentric theories. (At any moment, one expects to hear the voices of Naphta and Settembrini again, as the debate between vitalism and humanism erupts once more in this new *Magic Mountain*.) Darwin is also revisited: "Given its unflattering implications for human nature, natural selection as an explanation for biological development and human origin is not likely to have been produced by human desire (with its cultural configuration and aims) but required the most impartial and disinterested response to exotic and alienating Nature of the kind Darwin encountered on his travels" (p. 221). I myself confess to a certain irreverent preference for C. L. Lewontin's less elevated suggestion in "Darwin, Mendel and the Mind" (NYRB 32 October 10, 1985, 18-23) that Darwin may have arrived at his theory of differential survival "for reasons external to scientific reasoning—for example that his income was largely derived from stocks (largely railroad shares) which he actively traded and whose rise and fall he followed daily, and with considerable care, in the newspaper" (ibid., p. 20).

Unfortunately, I cannot bring myself to consider everything with which I differ in this book in a similarly casual or humorous spirit. Without dwelling on the persistent infatuation of French, and consequently American, thought with Nietzsche, I cannot help observing that some of the most unsavory corollaries that sometimes accompany Nietzschean thinking appear in this book. It was long considered unfashionable to regard Nietzsche as a proto-Nazi or to blame him for the adoption of some of his ideas by the Nazis. I am far from suggesting any analogy, but I do find some of the things that Ms. Norris chooses to do with Nietzsche disquieting. Have we really been so short of beasts among men in our time that we have to go in search of more, or create more? Learned as it is, this book seems unaware that the "*Lebensphilosophie*" which it espouses was a familiar element in proto-Nazi thinking, and enunciated in much the same set of slogans as this book's. Norris preaches that we should "return from our imaginative life in deferred dreams and aspirations to the eternal now of our bodies and our living vitality. The beasts of the modern imagination teach us only what we already know and what is, in any event, entirely tautological: that life is, above all, life" (p. 238). Disinterred from among my notes taken in a course on 20th century German literature in 1945, the following passage confronts me: "Life-philosophy consists of the following: the substitution of life for understanding as the fundamental ontological layer, and the derivation of the intellectual and the spiritual from that." ("*Lebensphilosophie besteht darin, an Stelle des Verstandes das Leben als die ontologische Grundsicht anzusetzen und nun von hier aus das Intellektuelle and Geistige abzuleiten.*" Fritz Heinemann, *Neue Wege der Philosophie* [(Leipzig, 1929), p. 158. Cf. Norris, p. 8]. Stefan George, Heinrich Mann, even the Thomas Mann of the *Betrachtungen*, demonstrate that the intellectual does not necessarily remain detached from popular doctrines glorifying irrationality, violence, and *Blut and Boden*. What may seem a harmless academic exercise today, an innocent form of German vitalism weirdly redisseminated by a French Algerian Jew, may become interwoven with the prevalent fundamentalism, xenophobia, and political reaction of our time to become the nightmare of tomorrow. I wish I could help remembering, when I read Norris's repeated insulting references to the "life-denying culture" (p. 169) which she longs to see "abolished," that not so long ago an insignificant playwright succeeded in immortalizing himself with a single line: "When I hear the word Culture, I slip the safety-catch off my Browning." ("*Wenn ich Kultur höre, entsichere ich meinen Browning.*" Hanns Johst, *Schlageter: Schauspiel* [München, Albert Langen/Georg Müller, 1933], p. 26).

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The Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern Culture by Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit. New York: Schocken Books, 1985. Pp. viii + 136. \$19.95.

Not only an extraordinary contribution to the study of Assyrian art, *The Forms of Violence* is a dazzling, often acrobatic meditation on Freud, violence,

and (preeminently narrative) representation as well. It focusses many of the ideas that have dominated Bersani's long engagement with psychoanalytic thought, and brings them to bear on a textual field outside the orbit of contemporary criticism, the palace reliefs drawn from the work of the 9th to the 7th centuries B. C. now displayed at the British Museum. Displacing our attention, and attempting to articulate a positive alternative to the ways in which Western culture has managed desire through the representation of violence, the book is controversial in many ways: first as a critique of Assyrian art, which it appears to see with virtually new eyes; second as a rereading of Freud in line with the work of Laplanche and others; third as a critique of our culture and its perhaps unintended but pervasive obsession with violence; and fourth as a polemic against narrative itself, which the authors see as responsible for sustaining and encouraging a cultural receptivity to such violence.

The shock among Assyriologists might be buffered by the elaborate idiosyncrasy of the methodology. The micro-analysis undertaken by the authors concentrates not so much on details as on the details of details, and on elements that traditional iconographic and narratively-oriented analysis purposely ignores. They attend to formal elements rather than to "complete" representations, and to the spaces "between" forms, the "direction" in which forms lead the eye, and so forth. Where previous criticism has seen in the palace reliefs an obsession with cruelty and violence, a suppressed or deadened subjectivity, confusion and political reaction—"Subjects of only peripheral human interest transmit a message of repellent violence," as the authors summarize the *idées reçues*—they see a principle of marginality and vagrancy, a desire to subvert narrative, to distract the eye from central subjects, to particularize the subject, to mobilize interpretive attention and even, in effect, to de-claw the lion through what they at one point call "an astonishingly tender violence" in which, for example, horses do not trample as much as "cradle" the fallen enemy troops beneath their hooves. At no point is a specific narrative scene engaged as such. I suspect that the extraordinary novelty of the interpretation as well as the "irresponsibility" of the methodology will encourage a quick dismissal of the entire work by the community of scholars professionally engaged with the Assyrian palace reliefs.

But this should not trouble either the authors, who virtually parade their amateur standing, or the rest of us, most of whom know nothing and care less about Assyrian art in the first place. For what the authors intend is not so much to reorient Assyrian studies as to orient the occidental narrative paradigm. They detect in the palace reliefs a counter- or anti-narrative energy that resists the ways in which narrative hierarchizes, centralizes, effaces and forecloses. Indeed, they argue that the narrative predisposition is precisely what accounts for the Western revulsion in the presence of Assyrian art. To the authors, the astonishing and redundant violence of this art constitutes a reduction of narrative to its essence, a fascination with acts of violence. But on closer inspection—and it is hard to imagine human eyes undertaking an inspection any closer—the reliefs enact, they contend, an artful subversion of that essence, disclosing the possibility of something outside narrative and violence. The repetition or formalization of figures, for example, suppresses differences crucial to a narrative reading and produces an emphasis on

"counternarrative organizations and identifications" (p. 9). Finally, the palace reliefs "are particularly instructive about a kind of sliding between narrative and nonnarrative modes of organization in perception and thought" (p. 14), and this sliding has doubly confounded those who, condemning the reliefs for inadequate narrativity, reveal thereby both the inadequacy of narrative to account for this art, and their own inability to perceive in any other than a narrative way.

The counternarrative argument leans heavily on a critique of Freud, in whose thought a new, speculative energy has recently been discovered and foregrounded, particularly by Lacan and Laplanche. Bersani has been perhaps the foremost American theoretician associated with the unearthing of this new Freud, and this book is his most ingenious and mature work in this area. The arguments are patiently worked out and resist condensation or paraphrase, but the center of all the essays on psychoanalytic thought in this book is the notion of desire as a consistently destabilizing force that escapes or positively subverts the binding and centering processes of psychic organization. The most conspicuous feature of desire is its perfect mobility; it is always on the move, continuously displacing images, unendingly exchanging one image for another through relation and substitution. Desire always seeks a disruption of equilibrium, a disruption that becomes specifically sexual whenever a certain threshold of intensity is reached, so that "sexuality" is not a different form of psychic energy but merely a measure of the intensity of disturbance. Desire, they conclude, "produces sexuality" (p. 33), as well as producing, at a lower level of excitation, fantasy, the introjection of desirable objects in mental representation.

The psychoanalytic essays—on dream-theory, fetishism, the "primary" and "secondary" processes—are shuffled in with interpretive descriptions of the palace reliefs, producing a double, and doubled, commentary, itself a kind of sliding between speculative psychoanalytics and a reading of artifacts. Noting the curious detachment of the men spearing a charging lion, for example, the authors can illuminate the hunters' apparent nonchalance by referring to Freud on "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," which differentiates between sadomasochistic pleasure as excitation, and sadomasochistic fulfillment as an absolute "discharge" through death. The enraged, gored lion represents an excitation in the mastery over nature that constitutes the "first step" of sadism; while the neutrality of the hunters' features, containing no traces of excitation, suggests fulfillment. The "lesson" of the whole "is one of affectless violence—of that 'non-sexual sadism' . . . [which] expresses a fantasy of self-displacing and self-shattering desire having at last been totally evacuated. The undisturbed human mastery of the doomed lion's energy gives us the image of an ideal, impossible control over the self and the world" (p. 35).

Thus Freudian thought illuminates certain troubling features in the palace reliefs, features which otherwise might suggest a deficiency of artistry or even of common "humanity." But the hunters' impassivity also suggests a counter-Freudian conclusion, that the desire to which they testify is *not* a phenomenon of psychic projection. The reliefs "solicit a type of passionate responsiveness to the world distinct from the mimetic or identificatory responsiveness which accounts for all the psychic movements described by Freud" (p. 37); indeed, the faces may be so empty of expression that they

move us "merely to keep moving," frustrating our "natural" (i. e., narrative, mimetic) desire to identify and empathize.

The analysis of the reliefs operates in a continual friction with the reading of Freud, with the continual effect of destabilizing and decentering both the reliefs and Freud. But the most prominent, polemic, and problematic aspect of *The Forms of Violence* is the attack on narrative—the model for psychic binding, the "dominant mimetic strategy in our culture," and the form in which we most easily recognize reality. Indeed, Bersani and Dutoit are writing in and audaciously seeking to subvert a critical context in which narrative is sometimes taken to be the central instance of human consciousness, a universal and unchallenged mode of perception and expression. The imperialism of narrative over consciousness is simply repeated in the contemporary critical valuation of narrative over other modes.

Bersani and Dutoit propose another version of narrative as a mode which reflects and promotes "forms of violence" through its hierarchical organization of details, its marginalization of the "irrelevant," its plot and linear causality, all of which tend towards an "excessive" intelligibility and a suppression of differences, including the difference between art and life. In their view, narrative is not only concerned thematically with violence, but reenacts that violence in its formal operations, its modes of intelligibility. Narrative systematically expels that which it cannot reduce, particularly those figures who cannot be assimilated to a structural frame, those whose desire is excessively mobile, including many of the heroes and heroines of 19th-century fiction. Desire itself, which they conclude by calling "curiously mild and pacific," is the paradigmatic victim of narrative, whose ideal form is the "detemporalized process" of the military march, a process which masters all differences in an utter "triumph of the conscious mind." Even transgressions of narrativity in plots that meander or digress are typically thematized as obvious violations of the "deeply ingrained habit of narrativity" (p. 51).

The palace reliefs, by contrast, honor the "mobility of a forgetful perception which dismisses centers and reconstructs temporary orders" (p. 46); they constitute "the simplest model of linear, non-transgressive storytelling," a resistance that is not implicated in the paradigm it resists. Assyrian art continually enjoins the viewer to look away from centers and toward supplemental, nonnarrative points of interest, forestalling a destructive fixation on anecdotal violence by stimulating psychic dislocations of desire.

The question to be addressed to Bersani and Dutoit is whether, in their scorn for contemporary narratology (whose results, they say, "have not been very enlivening" [p. 52]), they have read enough of it. Or enough narrative. If narrative were the empire of paralysis they depict it to be it would scarcely have stood the test of time the way it has. Indeed, time is precisely what is left out of Bersani and Dutoit's account of narrative as detemporalized process. Essentially, Bersani and Dutoit blame narrative for structuralism's (discredited) account of it, and propose as an alternative an antinarrative organization which tolerates the "natural tendency to swerve." In doing so, they represent their case as being non-Western, radical, transgressive, faithful to nature and reality. But their argument minimizes what, in tiny ways throughout, they elsewhere concede, that the interest or life of narrative lies precisely in those transgressions of "narrativity"—in other words, that narra-

tivity embraces its own transgressions not simply as an opportunity for the exercise of power but as a structural necessity. The powerful order of centering and closure is immanent in narrative, but so is wandering. Bersani and Dutoit's implicit opposition between desire and narrative might be complemented by the opposition produced by their Berkeley colleague D. A. Miller, who, in *Narrative and its Discontents* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), opposed "narratibility" to closure. Miller's narratibility is Bersani and Dutoit's desire, while his closure, a virtually alien force that intrudes into and dominates narrative, is their narrative. Both can't be right.

Indeed, neither is, for they both misconceive and simplify narrative, opposing it to either desire or closure, without seeing that both the restlessness of the one and the ordered stasis of the other are intrinsic to narrative. Narrative is distinguished among modes of cognition by its capacity to unify space and time, "vertical" and "horizontal," in a single representation. Centering and decentering, wandering and marching, narrative enables us to think space and time together. Strikingly, this is one way of reading the Assyrian reliefs themselves. Always narrative, they are also always, as the authors prove, always mobile in the forms of attention they solicit. In them, the "primary process" persists in the narrative modes that deny it; in them, an "eruption of the errant" defies the aesthetic and psychic bonds that seek to contain it. Where the authors go wrong is in supposing that this mobility is counternarrative. It is, rather, narrative through and through. Finally, in their invocation of the natural, the authors badly underestimate the naturalness of the desire for centering, subordination and closure. Why would culture—all cultures—develop such a form if not in "natural" response to a profound need—and not merely the pragmatic, limited, "sadistic" need to "master our environment," but to live in it in a fully human habitation?

This inadequacy in the conception of narrative may depend upon and reflect a parallel inadequacy in the conception of desire, an inadequacy that emerges when the formula "Desire produces sexuality" is compared with Foucault's statement in *The History of Sexuality* Volume 1 that the "deployment of sexuality" produces sex. "Sex," according to Foucault, "is the most speculative, most ideal and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures" (p. 155). For Bersani and Dutoit, sex is a function or reflex of an intrinsically restless and mobile "desire"; while for Foucault, sex is produced by power-mechanisms. Like narrative, sex may be a double-faced, or double-phased, entity. If Bersani and Dutoit are correct in relating sexuality and fantasy to desire, then desire must account for, among other things, the narrative they would oppose to it. As the body's narrative, sex may engender excitation and movement while tending toward expulsion, cessation and closure. Such an equivalence could help explain the "universality" of both narrative and sex by positing a relation between the most profound expressions of bodily need and of imaginative coherence. We can even begin, with this suggestion, to map out the resistance between bodily and imaginative needs on the basis that both are themselves structured by a kind of resistance between what Bersani and Dutoit call the "natural tendency to swerve" and another, equally natural tendency to head for home.