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Book Reviews

Ben Jonson: A Life by David Riggs. Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989. Pp. xi + 399. \$35.00 (cloth).

Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage by Robert C. Evans. Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1989. Pp. 334. \$45.00 (cloth).

David Riggs's new biography of Jonson, and Robert Evans's study of the poet's engagement in the politics of patronage build on and extend the new historicism's attempts to universalize courtly power politics as the dominant matrix producing much late Renaissance English writing. Having adopted Michel Foucault's model of textuality as a form of political power, the new historicists have sought to reveal in the writing of Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, and Jonson (to name the most important figures) their domination by an ideology of hierarchical power invested in courtly patronage, itself a reflection of the power politics indigenous to monarchical governments and aristocratic establishments.

David Riggs's is the fullest account of Jonson's life we have to date. It follows hard upon Rosalind Miles, *Ben Jonson: His Life and Work* published in 1986, and like Miles Riggs produces a complete narrative life by placing Jonson's literary productions in the context of historical and literary events of Jonson's own time. While neither Riggs nor Miles uncover new biographical evidence other than that already contained in the Herford-Simpson Oxford edition of Jonson, the *Jonson Allusion Book*, and scattered biographical monographs, Riggs's biography should now be held the preferred account by reason of the mass of historical material with which he fuses his account of Jonson's life and literary career.

Riggs's account nevertheless opens itself to question on two scores, First, regarding aspects of Jonson's life for which he has no independent data, he relies on questionable psychoanalytic interpretations of his literary works in order to glean from them reflections of Jonson's inner life. Second, he uncritically assumes the politics of *ressentiment* privileged by the new historicism and insists that "the dominant motifs of Jonson's profession life are social and literary ambition" (2). Expounding a position elaborated fully in Evans's study of Jonson's nondramatic poetry, Riggs sees reflected in Jonson's writing primarily his "ultimate, and unrealizable, ambition . . . to transcend his origins," an ambition characterized as "the drive towards a vindictive triumph" (3). As Riggs says, "this young man bore a heavy load of resentment" (18) that produced the desire to achieve courtly status and patronage at the cost of his ethical integrity. Riggs finds, for instance, that by the time he came to write the early masques Jonson "now realized that praise and blame were politically charged rhetorical formulas that he could adapt to suit any occasion" (147), and Riggs argues that "however stridently he asserts his independence, his writing is bound to reflect the preferences of his patrons" (205).

While there is no question that Jonson was driven by ambition for courtly patronage, as were many writers and humanist scholars during the Renaissance, the particular interpretation Riggs gives this ambition only succeeds in calling into question Jonson's ethical integrity, and by extension the literary worth of his writing. Like Evans, Riggs finds little of interest in Jonson's plays, masques, and poems beyond their usefulness in unmasking his neurotic obsessions. Where Evans limits these obsessions to resentment at and

pursuit of "personal power," Riggs takes a psychoanalytic perspective in which childhood traumas are largely determinative. Thus Jonson's adulterous escapades enact his Oedipal rage against his stepfather by cuckolding other husbands (19). His "infantile resentments" generate obsession with excrement because he had spent his childhood next to an open sewer (62). In *Poetaster* "instead of killing his enemy he sublimated his aggressive energies in his art, just as he had done in his three earlier comedies" (80). He links Jonson's putative obsession with the deaths of children and a lost play about Richard III, which also dealt with infantile mortality, thereby satisfying "the criteria that were uppermost in Jonson's mind" (91).

Psychobiography is a sometimes useful form of biographical investigation, if difficult to bring off convincingly. The foundations of Riggs's psychological speculations, however, are shallow and unexamined but might nevertheless persuade were his analyses of the plays he calls to witness these speculations carried out with full recognition of their formal and thematic complexities. Riggs exhibits a limited knowledge of the vast literature on Jonson's works, sometimes citing uncritically a single book or article as the foundation of his own interpretations. (Typical in this regard is his unexamined acceptance of the *Catiline*-Guy Fawkes connection argued by Barbara DeLuna in *Jonson's Romish Plot: A Study of "Catiline" and Its Historical Context* [1967], 176.)

The result is a biography certainly useful for its assemblage of the historical contexts that impinge on Jonson's career, but seriously questionable in its interpretations of the literary productions that constituted that career. Riggs's attempts at psychobiography may persuade those who are persuaded by such efforts. But his interpretation of Jonson's career as motivated by the will to power needs careful scrutiny. Such scrutiny and revision as Riggs's biography invites become a crying need in the case of Robert Evans's study of Jonson's poetry, where Riggs's perspective and approach are pushed to dubious extremes, and where the enterprise of new historicism is itself laid seriously open to question.

Evans applies to Renaissance courtly patronage modern sociological analysis of "self-presentation" derived from the work of Erving Goffman (1959) and that of other sociologists following Goffman, e.g., Edward Jones (*Ingratiation* [1964]). In this scenario of social interaction rivalry and striving for "personal power" are fueled by promises of personal advancement and threats of personal sanction indigenous to Renaissance patronage systems. Evans reads Jonson as totally dominated by such promises and threats, with the consequence that all his literary works—plays and masques as well as poetry—become nothing more than strategies for personal advancement. Taking his cue mainly from Frank Whigham's *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (1984), but continuing a line of analysis already developed by earlier new historicist scholarship, Evans gives us a Jonson who, though a courtly sycophant and flatterer, nevertheless strives to maintain the public persona of a poet independent of the need for such striving. Evans finds new complexity in Jonson's poetry by reading it as at once embodying various strategies of "self-promotion," and seeking to conceal such strategies behind the constructed persona of an independent, centered self.

Evans's "micropolitical" model of self-presentation has already been ana-

lyzed before Goffman by the philosopher Max Scheler in his book entitled *Ressentiment* (English trans. 1961), a work which is indebted in turn to Nietzsche's analysis of slave morality in *The Genealogy of Morals*. *Ressentiment* means not simply "resentment," which refers to localized and temporary hostilities between two individuals or groups. *Ressentiment* is rather a global condition of a society that invests all members with a sense of personal inadequacy and the consequent need to compensate for it. It is a characteristic of any hierarchical social structure in which sado/masochistic relations dominate. Each individual masochistically accepts the deflation of self imposed by those above him/her, and in turn relays this deflation sadistically to those below.

Evans's micropolitical analysis emphasizes the devaluation of the individual in a courtly context. This devaluation drives him/her to seek validation in the eyes of an alien Other who consequently takes on a radically divided function: it confers a sense of self on the subject, while being the object of the subject's envy and hatred. This hatred in turn generates the need to unmask the Other's power and reduce it to a form of micropolitical power play in turn. Thus far Evans's analysis extends.

However, Scheler's analysis of *ressentiment* goes beyond Evans's discussion, and discloses its unacknowledged assumptions. The radical source of *ressentiment*, and of the "micropolitical" social structures that Evans posits as universal, is self-loathing. The person of *ressentiment* in Scheler's account always sees himself/herself through the eyes of an Other. This alienation of self from self nevertheless involves a corresponding projection of the self's self-loathing onto this Other, so that the denigrating glance of the Other has no content save that invested in it by the subject. *Ressentiment* in short is a form of narcissistic paranoia. Having no sense of self-identity save that conferred by others, the subject at once (1) projects self-loathing onto others, (2) interprets the denigratory judgment of the alien Other as something independent of the self, (3) seeks the approval of the Other, and (4) calls the Other's capacity to confer this approval into question by unmasking the Other's power as itself a function of paranoiac self-presentation.

Evans's analysis assumes these projections and takes them for granted without making them explicit. He continually uses such terms as "power," "self," and particularly "attraction," without explaining what these words mean in the context of his argument. Clearly, in Evans's world of courtly *ressentiment* the powerful person is the "attractive" person who does not need (i.e., does not appear to need) the regard (view, valuation) of others. On the contrary, as Evans says repeatedly, all independence of *ressentiment* is itself a pretense. Evans's analysis reflects current new historical discussions of the Renaissance court, which demystify patronage as a form of power grounded in the illusion of a transcendent, independent subject. Power becomes relational rather than substantive, something invested in networks of social interactions rather than invested indigenously in persons. "Power" is consequently possessed by no one and can be conferred by no one, and yet it comes into existence through interaction among these individuals. The new historicism situates a contradictory conception of power at the center of its own analysis: others possess power, others do not possess power. Evans's study makes explicit this contradiction in varying degrees implicit in other

new historicist studies of Renaissance literature. Since Evans does not query the source of the "power" which the courtier/poet seeks to tap, he has no occasion to note that his own model denies that any such source exists.

Whether patronage systems, at Renaissance courts or elsewhere, are wholly reducible to the micropolitics of *ressentiment* is highly questionable. Though Evans cites in a footnote the seminal work of S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger (*Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* [Cambridge, 1984]), he seems not to have taken its complex import into account. Patron-client relations, wherever they have occurred, run a large spectrum from the totalitarian to equality, and from dominance to friendship, and this study clearly shows that relations characterized by *ressentiment* are by no means the norm. While Evans supports his analyses of individual poems with a wealth of anecdote regarding power struggles at the Jacobean court, and in this makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the background of Jonson's own literary career, he single-mindedly interprets these anecdotes as exemplary of micropolitical *ressentiment*.

Regarding the poems and masques that reflect Jonson's own relations with friends, literary rivals, aristocratic patrons, and with the King himself, Evans's analysis is equally thesis-ridden: in each and every case Jonson constructs a self and an address whose sole purpose is "self-promotion." Indicative of Evans's tunnel-vision on these matters is his neglecting to examine in detail Jonson's most important poetic statement on patronage, "An Epistle to Sir Edward Sacville." Deriving it largely from Seneca's *De beneficiis* (a work that Evans likewise cites but seems not to have taken seriously), Jonson critiques the ways in which patronage relations can degenerate into "micropolitical" power struggles, and also the attitudes on the part of both patron and client necessary to avoid such degeneration.

It is consequently important that, having reduced Jonson's literary works to nothing but rhetorical forms of self-promotion, Evans is left with the single most important feature of these works to explain, namely their collective literary excellence. Arguing that the poetic power of Jonson's verse functions as a strategy of self-promotion, the poetic "complexity" Evans purports to find in Jonson's poetry means the unconscious simulative and dissimulative strategies elicited by the will at once to display and conceal the self. The key word here is "unconscious," and Evans does not shrink from accusing Jonson of being unaware of what he is doing when he writes his poems. Clearly the priorities of literary analysis have been inverted when the reader discovers Evans commenting on Jonson's poetic genius only to assert in effect that Jonson is being a great poet just in order to "promote" his "power" as a great poet. Evans's micropolitical analysis cannot encompass Jonson's greatness as a poet, a greatness which, in truly constituting his personal power, makes him to that extent independent of Evans's micropolitical model.

The all-pervading politics of *ressentiment* governing court life at the turn of the seventeenth century which the new historicists take as ultimate is in effect a form of Renaissance self-fashioning that Jonson has already deconstructed, and credited to a cringing and envious complicity with structures of power and status that are empty because empty of a self-validated self. The new historicism has in effect rewritten Jonson's satirical poems for him, but

without taking cognizance of the positive values that alone give these satirical poems their ethical force. And Evans's failure to account for Jonson's literary achievement is symptomatic of the new historicism's larger failure to encompass Jonson's literary and ethical stature.

Specifically, Evans's "micropolitics" cannot register the Renaissance humanist enterprise that constitutes the self in its own intellectual labor independent of established socio-political power structures. Though subject in various ways to the power of patronage, many humanist intellectuals and artists along with Jonson were independent in spirit of this power, and defined their ethical norms particularly against the *ressentiment* these structures generate. And no one saw more incisively than Jonson through the signs of nobility with which an increasingly degenerate aristocracy cloaked its unworthiness to retain the privileges of governance. The claims of these humanist new men, including Jonson, rested not a little on the intellectual labor by which they defined their own true nobility against the false nobility of courtly power, and consequently against the politics of *ressentiment* which Evans's new historicism predicates of them.

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Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue by Paul Magnuson. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988. Pp. xiv + 330. \$35.00 (cloth).

For many years scholars have been aware of the unique literary relationship between Coleridge and Wordsworth, who, as Thomas McFarland remarked, "not only pervasively influenced one another; they did so in a way that challenges ordinary methods of assessment" ("The Symbiosis of Coleridge and Wordsworth," *SiR* 2 [1972]: 263). Coleridge and Wordsworth identified so closely with one another that in many instances critics have had difficulties differentiating between a Wordsworthian or Coleridgean persona in a particular text, or even establishing with certainty the authorship of given poems (see e.g., the controversy between David Erdman and Stephen Maxfield Parrish in "Who Wrote *The Mad Monk?*: A Debate," *BNYPL* 64 [1960]). In his recent study, Paul Magnuson renders such controversies pointless, arguing that Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetry should be regarded as a single work, constituted by two voices simultaneously, each having its source in the other in the same way that stanzas of an ode are mutually interdependent. Magnuson proposes a new methodology for reading Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetry as an extended lyrical dialogue that enabled each poet to produce more writing by alluding to, appropriating, negating and redirecting the utterance of the other. Essential to this methodology is the emphasis on earlier or contemporaneous writing as a context for given poems, an emphasis which displaces a concern with authorial intention in a single work. For Magnuson, no poem exists in isolation from other writing; "its borders blend with those of poems it echoes and anticipates, and its resolutions are undone by work that follows" (28). The relevant context for a particular poem is often constituted by fragments, drafts and works in progress

which Magnuson considers to be as significant to a dialogic reading of the Coleridge-Wordsworth canon as completed poems. What matters to Magnuson most is a principle of ongoing productivity, i.e. texts that engender further texts, be they fragments or full poems. This perspective enables Magnuson to reassess the status of a number of poems in the Coleridge-Wordsworth canon. Unlike Parrish, for example, Magnuson regards the poems of the first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* as less important (with the exception of "Tintern Abbey") than those of the second volume because they were "not generative of further poetry" (21). On the other hand, "Home at Grasmere," a flawed poem according to some critics, is in Magnuson's opinion highly significant as a response to Coleridge's "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" and as a source for the opening stanzas of "The Immortality Ode," while the first version of Wordsworth's "The Discharged Soldier" provides a far more radical response to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" than "Peter Bell."

Although the methodology adopted by Magnuson is vulnerable to a number of objections, his study offers one of the most challenging, innovative and in-depth analyses of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's relationship that has yet appeared. In virtually every chapter the reader will find new points of view on well-known poems and valuable corrections to previous readings shared by many critics. Magnuson is the only critic among those who have dealt with the Coleridge-Wordsworth dialogue who analyzes extensively the earliest versions of poems and sundry fragments by both poets, and his findings in this area constitute a major contribution to our understanding of the writers' debts to one another.

It is fair to say that although Magnuson tries to sidestep the debate as to whether Coleridge formed deeper dependencies on Wordsworth or vice versa, his study offers conclusive evidence that Wordsworth benefited more from his dialogue with Coleridge than did his partner. Coleridge's poetry, Magnuson claims, "was the prime influence on Wordsworth's from the first days of their association until the winter of 1799-1800, when Wordsworth began to describe himself as a self-generated poet" (10). After a preliminary discussion of his methodology, Magnuson begins with a chapter on the relationship between the "Salisbury Plain" poems and "Religious Musings," and between *The Borderers* and *Oso rio*. He locates the source of the entire narrative of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in the revisions of the early versions of "Salisbury Plain," which shift the emphasis from the social consequences of war to the psychological disturbances caused by guilt and terror on an individual. At the same time, Magnuson demonstrates that "Religious Musings" had a profound influence on Wordsworth's subsequent writings, teaching the poet how one could sustain human sympathy at a time of social disintegration and change terror into hope and awe. In other words, during the early phase of their interaction, Coleridge absorbed Wordsworth's private pessimism at the very time when Wordsworth embraced Coleridge's public optimism as an antidote to his mood in 1796. In his discussion of *The Borderers*, Magnuson challenges the widely held critical opinion that the play represents a warning against the abuse of the intellect, arguing that the 1797 version, as Coleridge correctly interpreted it, "offered the temptation to a crime, not through liberation of the intellect, but through liberation of the imagination to reach for sublimity" (55).

In chapter 3 Magnuson documents further the relationship between "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and the "Salisbury Plain" poems, showing how Coleridge redefined the theme of Wordsworth's poems by insisting that suffering can acquire a voice. This in turn generated a response from Wordsworth, who in "The Discharged Soldier" naturalized the alienated figure of the wandering mariner and restored the connection between character and voice, which remained dissociated in Coleridge's narrative. The important point raised by this chapter is that some of the most productive moments in the dialogue between Coleridge and Wordsworth involved works which were at a stage of transition from one version to another, or were not yet completed. Thus, Wordsworth's sailor becomes Coleridge's mariner at the point of transition between "Salisbury Plain" and "Adventures on Salisbury Plain," while Wordsworth appropriates the figure of the mariner from Coleridge before "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was actually completed.

In chapter 4 Magnuson presents a most unusual pairing of dialogic poems, arguing that "Christabel" is in essence Coleridge's version of the central themes of "The Ruined Cottage," namely loss of hope, wandering and the terror of a figure detached from a natural landscape. This is in my view the least convincing chapter of the book. Surely Christabel's wandering and sense of shame have a different source from Margaret's in Wordsworth's poem, and the rubric under which both poems are classified as "anatomies of hope and despair" is too general to be very meaningful. While it is true that Margaret's constant wandering in search of her husband renders her prey to "passive despair" and "severe disorientation," it could be said that Christabel's act of leaving the death-in-life sterile atmosphere of the castle, however disastrous in the long run, is not aimless. Like Blake's *Thel*, Christabel is at the point of transition between innocence and experience, but unlike Blake's heroine, she takes the full plunge into the terrifying mysteries of sexuality. Wordsworth was closer to the truth than Magnuson when he sensed in "Christabel" such a divergent imaginative universe from his own that he excluded the poem from the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Magnuson makes a more plausible case in chapter 5, where he links "The Ruined Cottage" and Coleridge's conversation poems, to which Wordsworth turned repeatedly for a conclusion to Margaret's story. This chapter focuses on the differences between Wordsworth's literal conception of nature's language and Coleridge's figural representation and demonstrates persuasively that in appropriating the figure of the Eolian harp, Wordsworth both invests it with a centrality it did not originally possess in the 1796 version of Coleridge's poem ("Effusion XXXV"), and divests it of the qualifications and doubts that are evident both from the poem itself and from its location in the sequence of poems Coleridge devised for his 1797 volume. The rest of the chapter presents a reading of "Tintern Abbey" as a response to "Frost at Midnight," advancing the claim that the most radical challenge posed by Coleridge's poem for Wordsworth was the threat of dissociated lyric moments that could dissipate into nothingness in the absence of a coherent artistic form. It was this problem that Wordsworth faced in the early drafts of *The Prelude*, a matter Magnuson takes up in chapter 6, arguably his best and most provocative chapter. Here Magnuson shows that Wordsworth's effort to free himself from Coleridge's influence by turning to his own childhood for

sources of creativity actually rendered him even more dependent on Coleridge than before, for his recollections of childhood turned out to be recollections of other *texts* of childhood, primarily Coleridge's. Hence Wordsworth encountered an increasingly uneasy sense of their fictional status and came to realize that the structuring of his text was the only reliable prop against "the fragmentary nature of recollection". As Wordsworth discovered that neither nature, nor memory or imagination could provide unity to a disjointed state of consciousness, the "ground for his text became an ordering of the fragments, a textual, not a psychological or phenomenological principle" (227).

The remaining three chapters take up the history of Wordsworth's sustained though not entirely successful efforts to dissociate himself from Coleridge. In chapter 7 Magnuson discusses Wordsworth's aggressive attempt to found the myth of a self-generated poet in "Home at Grasmere" and the discrepancies between the themes of volume I and II of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Chapter 8 deals as closely with Wordsworth's exchange with Coleridge in 1802 (articulated in "Dejection: An Ode," in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" and in "Resolution and Independence") as with Wordsworth's dialogue with his own poetry, showing how the "Immortality" ode reverses the confident affirmations of "Home at Grasmere" and how in his revisions of "The Leech-Gatherer" Wordsworth called into question the "easy, unconscious naturalism" characteristic of his earlier beliefs. The same focus on the revisionary nature of Wordsworth's poetry informs Magnuson's concluding chapter in which he places the Arab dream episode of *The Prelude* in a lyric sequence including the completion of the "Immortality" ode, the drafts of the dedication scene, the meeting with the discharged soldier and the ascent of Snowdon, all composed in February and March 1804.

Like other studies that propose a revision of the established critical canon, Magnuson's book is bound to excite some readers and displease others. Committed Wordsworth enthusiasts might conceivably respond negatively to Magnuson's overt partiality to Coleridge. Magnuson often condemns Wordsworth for his literalism, which he opposes to Coleridge's superior sense of the figurative nature of language. For example, he blames Wordsworth for his inability to "come to grips with the figurative as it was used in 'The Ancient Mariner'" (92), or for reading Coleridge's conversation poems "with the same inattention to their figurative nature as he tried to read nature itself" (141). Secondly, readers who might still cling to notions inherited from new criticism concerning the autonomy and singularity of texts, might find Magnuson's emphasis on contextual readings to be exaggerated. It is certainly a legitimate question, regardless of one's critical orientation, whether "Tintern Abbey" can be read in the context of "Frost at Midnight" as "an optimistic affirmation of a continuity of personal growth grounded in nature's continuous ministry and in the 'language of the sense' that is direct and unambiguous" (177). Such a view contradicts the elegiac mood of the poem as experienced by so many readers, its constant return to new beginnings that refuse to yield the consolations sought by the speaker or erase the sense of loss that cannot be accommodated to his avowed philosophy of recompense. We do not need a different context provided by the Goslar drafts for the early *Prelude* or the Lucy poems to undo the "calm assurances" of "Tintern Abbey." Wordsworth's doubts are imbedded in the poem itself, irrespective of the contexts of other writing.

A more general objection concerns Magnuson's assessment of the Coleridge-Wordsworth relationship. Studies of this relationship have changed over the years, from fairly sentimental versions of the kinship between the two poets to radical demystifications of their presumed affinity for one another, as exemplified by Parrish's pioneering work on the *Lyrical Ballads*, or more recently by Lucy Newlyn's analysis of the "disparity, aggression, or unease" underlying the public myth of "shared assumptions and common aims" that both poets helped generate (*Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986], viii). Magnuson returns us to a more optimistic evaluation of this relationship. He deliberately avoids an agonistic model as popularized by Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence, not only because it applies to the struggle between a poet and a precursor, but because it will not accommodate Magnuson's representation of the poetic exchange between Coleridge and Wordsworth as a nurturing and non-aggressive relationship, abiding by the rules of polite conversation rather than egotistical self-assertion. As Magnuson describes it, the so called "lyrical dialogue" between Coleridge and Wordsworth seems to be guided by the conventions of aristocratic decorum rather than the histrionics of oedipal disturbances: "After listening to the other poet," the critic writes, "each has the opportunity of responding" (ix). Magnuson even departs from Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogic reading to which he is indebted, noting the absence of parody in the dialogue between Coleridge and Wordsworth, which is marked instead by "shared themes and voices" (ix-x). And yet we know that parodying one another was so common a ground of self-definition for each poet (one need only think of Wordsworth's parody of the supernatural in "The Idiot Boy" or "Peter Bell") that it led David Erdman to assume that "The Mad Monk" was not Wordsworth's poem, but a Coleridgean parody of Wordsworth. Magnuson's sanitized account of the cavalier dialogue between Coleridge and Wordsworth not only ignores its disabling impact on each poet, but is contradicted by ample evidence in the book of misreadings and disagreements between the two writers. Magnuson's own definition of various kinds of lyric turns, which always involve some form of negation or rewriting of a previous text (22-27), is much closer to a Bloomian perspective than the critic is willing to admit.

Yet there remains an essential difference between Bloom's model of the interaction between two writers and Magnuson's position, primarily because Magnuson, who is not interested in Freudian psychology, draws his agonistic vocabulary from an entirely different tradition, namely the romantic philosophy of organicism. Even though Magnuson is opposed to some of the premises of organicism, attacking the notion of "an organic metaphor of development, in which the end is implied in the beginning" (30), or of the perfected and inviolable work of art, he is clearly operating within the tenets of this tradition when he claims that Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetry should be read as parts of "an intricately connected whole" or as stanzas of a single ode. More importantly, it is organicism that allows Magnuson to talk about the opposition between Coleridge and Wordsworth in paradoxically non-conflictual terms. As is well known, any notion of polarity in organic philosophy is predicated on the assumption of an underlying unity to which all polarity points and into which it is ultimately absorbed. But in adopting this

view one may end up sacrificing the individuality and distinctness of the parts that constitute the polar tension of this all engulfing unity, a fact to which Coleridge became increasingly sensitive when he tried to incorporate dynamic philosophy into his schema for the trinity. Magnuson seems unaware of the extent to which he reached the dead end of organicism, when he states that the "dialogue between Coleridge and Wordsworth begins in the recognition that the initial condition of their dialogue is identity and opposition. It continues in the hope, unfulfilled, that it could realize distinction and difference" (8 n.). Distinction and difference were actually present from the very beginning of the interaction between Coleridge and Wordsworth, but it is not surprising that they do not surface in a study that subscribes to the principles of organic philosophy. As Newlyn rightly suspected, the idea of an original unity of mind between Coleridge and Wordsworth was a myth invented by the two poets in keeping with the dominant romantic philosophy of the time.

These limitations do not, however, detract significantly from the overall quality of Magnuson's study which represents a major reassessment of Coleridge's relationship with Wordsworth. As a textual critic Magnuson is invariably stimulating and insightful in his reading of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetry. As a scholar he is indefatigable in hunting for the earliest drafts and versions of poems and the connections he uncovers between these and later versions constitute an invaluable fund of new knowledge for students of the romantic period. Magnuson has done the kind of meticulous work with manuscript versions of poems that few of us undertake gladly, but which seems imperative in view of the recent material made available by the Cornell Wordsworth edition. In addition to new perspectives on the Coleridge-Wordsworth dialogue, Magnuson's study will encourage a reevaluation of Wordsworth's poetry, which he views as a poetry of many beginnings and stages of transition, whose origins are often hidden in cancelled fragments and false starts, as well as in the earliest versions of Coleridge's poems.

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Romantic Texts and Contexts by Donald H. Reiman. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1988. Pp. ix + 395. \$32.00 (cloth).

Intervals of Inspiration, The Skeptical Tradition and the Psychology of Romanticism by Donald H. Reiman. Greenwood: Penkevill Publishing Company, 1988. Pp. xxiii + 449. \$30.00 (cloth).

To have published two books within twelve months attests to Reiman's stature as a leading Romanticist. One book is a collection of essays strung together by fascinating prefaces that describe the circumstances and occasion for each essay. Half the essays deal with issues related to editing Romantic texts, and the other half are interpretive essays on Romantic literature, mostly poetry. Another book is Reiman's ambitious effort to synthesize English Romanticism in an extended argument centering on philosophical skepticism

and the "psychology of Romanticism." Both books are valuable contributions to Romanticist studies and make as well a provocative gesture in the theoretical battle of the books by sustaining pugnaciously what one might call the old historicism.

In the introduction to *Romantic Texts and Contexts* Reiman spells out his theoretical assumptions in a typically clear and frank manner. Textual criticism, historical scholarship, and literary criticism constitute the field of study and comprise three interrelated focuses that bear on one another. The first task is to arrive at a reliable text, which Reiman demonstrates is not easy given the all too often sloppy and misguided practices of editors. (How Reiman defines a reliable text is interesting and relevant to his literary theory.) This text is then historicized by reconstructing what the author intended for a specific audience. Finally, the critic evaluates the work's contemporary relevance.

For the literary theory assumed by Reiman, one could turn to E. D. Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation*, which elaborates in philosophical detail objective hermeneutics. Objective hermeneutics or old historicism—by reason of the "new" historicism—assumes that the meaning of a text can be stabilized by reference to an author—the original intention, the historically specific shared values and aesthetic conventions of audience and author, the psychology of the author, the socio-historical factors putting constraints on meaning. Historicism was actually out of favor during the heyday of the New Criticism—indeed, New Criticism was in part a reaction against historicism. Historicism has been a favorite target for the new literary approaches at least since the sixties: the death of the author, the intentional fallacy, the decentered text, the instability of textual meaning, and so on. Historicism has been attacked by—among others—Heideggerians, deconstructionists, post-structuralists, and Marxists for a variety of theoretical errors and inadequacies. What strikes me, however, is how enduring is the historicist project despite the critiques. From at least Schleiermacher—or is it Gibbon, or perhaps even Spinoza?—historicism has insisted upon a knowable text whose meaning can be reconstructed by various more or less repeatable methods. Historicism has always been vulnerable to critique but at its best its practitioners have avoided dogmatism and simplistic interpretation. Indeed, the best historicists have utilized intuition, artfulness, sensitivity to nuance, and risky speculation in their reconstructions of meaning and have not relied exclusively on objective procedures. Reiman's criticism is in the best traditions of historicism.

Historicism has survived and prospered because in part it has been eclectic and adaptive, taking what it can use from competing methods without betraying its primary commitment to objective meaning. One line of critique against historicism has centered on the "reader" or critic who, within the historicist paradigm, is a mythically lucid interpreter without ideological or personal bias. *Romantic Texts and Contexts*, however, exercises an extraordinary degree of self-reflexiveness and self-scrutiny, thus subverting the image of the historicist as disinterested scientist. The italicized commentary connecting together the various essays reveals the circumstances which led up to the writing of each article, discussing with whom he studied, corresponded, argued and so on; he provides us with some gossip and academic trivia most academics love to read about; he also confesses at times to his own errors,

misguided enthusiasms and changes of opinion, but for the most part he upholds his former writings as having withstood critical examination. Just as when Reiman studies a text he researches the author's life from which that text issued, so he has provided us with some contextual information which is intrinsically interesting—providing an intriguing glimpse into English academic life from the fifties onwards—and helps us better evaluate his criticism. I favorably compare Reiman's self-revelations and nitty-gritty details to the Olympian aura over the collection of essays by Geoffrey H. Hartman, whose *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* contains only a brief introduction by the author and a much longer "Foreword" by someone else.

Reiman believes an editor should present texts to the reading public which come as close as possible to what that text's contemporary readers confronted, or—in cases where the author could not oversee the correction of a published text—which most closely approximate what seems to be the author's intention. In reviewing various editions of Romantic texts, Reiman is unforgiving of sloppiness, laziness, and carelessness, but he is most exercised by editorial interventions which result in various "modernizing" effects, thus corrupting the text's historical integrity, its strangeness. To modernize the spelling or punctuation of a Romantic text is, for Reiman, to destroy the text's integrity as an object of the past. When the sense of a line or sentence is obscured by peculiar spelling or punctuation, the editor can in a footnote clarify the sense without tampering with the text. More than a few editors have silently modernized texts so that future editors will have to redo all the work of collation. This is especially reprehensible because textual editors, privileged recipients of grant money and publishing contracts, have responsibilities to consumers of their texts and future generations of readers.

Modernized spelling and punctuation are hardly the only faults Reiman finds in various editions. Some editors have been spectacularly sloppy and wildly free with editorial emendations. Both qualities come in part from the spirit of the age, which is anti-historical and subjectivist. Neville Rogers, for example, could tamper so clumsily with Shelley's texts because he believed that, after all, Shelley did not really care about the final product read by real readers as the "real Shelley" existed in a Platonic realm of pure ideas and images. The Cornell Wordsworth, to take an example of a much higher calibre, is vitiated to some extent by its own anti-historical bias: factual matters dealing with history, biography, and geography are routinely and regularly overlooked in the notes (136-37), and the bias in favor of a young, supposedly unrepressed and "natural" Wordsworth—and therefore more creative Wordsworth—is never fully acknowledged or discussed. Drafts of poems Wordsworth never intended for publication are turned by editors into "reading texts" for advanced scholars and Reiman worries that these drafts will supplant the texts authorized by the author himself (135).

The most interesting textual controversy is of course *The Prelude*, whose different versions have been reproduced carefully in the Cornell Wordsworth and the Norton *Prelude*. Reiman is convinced that the 1799 and 1805 texts were never intended by Wordsworth to be published poems, that the 1850 is a far superior poem to the 1805 (though the latter is more autobiographically revealing (153)), and that "the only criterion for judging a text authoritative is the author's final intention . . ." (153). Reiman is disturbed that students will

be paying more attention to texts Wordsworth never wanted published than to texts he authorized. If we do not follow the author's wishes when they are ascertainable, as they are in Wordsworth's case, then we are left with merely subjective preference. Reiman does not object to rescuing drafts from the oblivion of mouldy manuscripts—indeed, he himself has launched several series of Romantic publications which make available to a general readership once rare manuscripts (*The Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics* and *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*)—but he believes these are for advanced students of Wordsworth's work, not first-time readers. Aside from the questions of taste, there are interesting ethical questions raised by the different versions of *The Prelude*. What if the 1805 version were substantially better than the 1850? I agree with Reiman that the 1850 really is the better poem, but what if it were not? Would we still have to teach the authorized version? A practical solution to the problem of different versions is what Reiman calls "versioning," a topic to which he devotes an entire chapter (167–80). Rather than try to create an ideal text, editors should "redirect [their] energies" for "the production of editions of discrete versions of works" (179). This is an intelligent, pragmatic approach that circumvents the thorny issues of intentionality. Or should I say "defers" rather than circumvents because after all we must decide which version of the text to teach our students and to write about; these decisions are unavoidable and have serious ethical consequences. Reiman's tireless work as a watchdog for sloppy and incoherent textual work has made it possible for us to make these decisions in a more knowledgeable fashion.

The second half of *Romantic Texts and Contexts* is comprised of nine previously published essays and a brief afterword. It is valuable to have all the essays in one place and to have as well the informative prefaces which provide an interesting commentary. His strengths as a critic are apparent after reading these essays: his intellectual curiosity, his encyclopedic knowledge of the lives and writings of the Romantics, his stubborn trust in his own methods of inquiry, and a rich sense of the contexts in which Romanticism was generated. Disputing the originality of Keats's humanistic naturalism, Reiman points to classical precedents and the *Pervigilium Veneris* (which turns out to be a favorite Latin text for schools in the early nineteenth century). To illuminate some obscure lines in *Prometheus Unbound*, he reconstructs Shelley's own itinerary in Rome and describes the "Roman Scenes." Similarly, he helped clarify *The Triumph of Life* simply by reading carefully what Shelley had read and referred to many times, Rousseau's *Julie*. What could have been a merely factual philological gloss on the Maid of Buttermere section in Book VII of the *Prelude* becomes a rich exploration of different Romantic responses to the same *cause célèbre*. Reiman has a good instinct for what we might call the obvious: his educated common sense serves him well. In his sociologically oriented criticism he has even adapted some Marxist ideas, as in "Shelley as Agrarian Reactionary," but in his many biographically and psychologically oriented essays he steers away from any specialist knowledge, in particular psychoanalytic concepts. As any reader of his psychologically slanted essays knows, Reiman is a subtle interpreter of human motives, but I cannot see any advantages to being untutored in psychoanalysis if one's focus is the psychosexual meaning of literary works. Here is one instance

where his intellectual curiosity should have provoked him to rely on more than just common sense.

Another problem with Reiman's criticism is its gratuitous attacks on the motives of his critical opponents. Although he sneers at jargon-laden critical ideas imported from the Continent as merely faddish, his own critical approach is hardly home-grown. Who is to say what is a fad and what is not? The origin of an idea, whether it is Paris or Topeka, is hardly the most relevant issue, and I find the neo-Emersonian populism of the "Afterword" unconvincing. Intellectual protectionism is not an adequate response to deconstruction and post-structuralism. Reiman's most effective response is actually his scholarly and critical work at their best which show in actuality an historicist criticism that is interesting and provocative. Reiman is a spirited but not an effective polemicist in the theory wars.

Although parts of *Intervals of Inspiration* are previously published articles which have been revised and reworked, the new book is in fact new and reads like a book not a collection of essays. I cannot hope to do justice to Reiman's argument, which depends on elaborate detail and close readings of many different texts, but I will try to present a very truncated summary. The English Romantics are distinctive and share an identity not simply by having lived through the French Revolution and its aftermath but by having undergone remarkably similar psychological experiences which at an early age turned them into "outsiders" (xvii), through either the loss of their parents or alienation from their families. They were furthermore alienated from "the two main value-systems of their day" (xix), namely aristocratic Christianity and middle-class utilitarianism. Turning to the skeptical philosophical tradition for intellectual justification, they tried "to create a new social order out of internalized value systems from other eras" (xix). Near the end of the book he articulates the heart of his argument: "To be relevant in the Romantic period, a major poet had to be, to one extent or another, a Skeptic just as surely as in Dante's time and place he had to be a Christian. Without Skepticism in some form, the intellectual climate dictated that the poet would either sink under the dead weight of an outworn Anglican orthodoxy or else chain his conscience to one of the anti-humanist alternative orthodoxies then current—Calvinism, Methodism, or rationalist utilitarianism" (347). In separate chapters he deals with all the Romantic poets except for Blake, and there is a chapter devoted to Lamb and Hazlitt, as well as an initial chapter devoted to philosophical skepticism.

Although the relevance of skepticism to Romantic literature has been written about before, especially in relation to Shelley, no critic until now has so highlighted the importance of skepticism. The first chapter provides a useful history of the skeptical tradition from classical times through the medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment and nineteenth-century eras. The historical overview permits him to speculate on the socio-historical factors conducive to skepticism: skeptics tend to be ideological conservatives trying to preserve humanistic values threatened by powerful innovative forces or entrenched dogmatism; they tend to be also practical liberals favoring tolerance in that they cannot sanction "persecuting those who disagree with their opinions" (11). Skepticism does not seem to flourish in either a rigidly closed society or a genuinely tolerant one (5). The Romantics could use the skeptical tradition

to carve out a space for themselves free from religious orthodoxy or the emergent Philistinism which was to define the Victorian age (46). The Romantic legacy then is the anti-utilitarian line of post-Romantic writing from Carlyle to Wilde (49), more or less the line of development and influence developed by Raymond Williams (although there are no references to Williams).

There is no space in which to summarize each chapter so my comments will be highly selective. To me the best chapter is the third on Coleridge where Reiman's method of psycho-biography plus close reading of texts yields an especially interesting and original interpretation of *Biographia Literaria* as a kind of *Tristram Shandy*, a convoluted and ornate if elegant joke. Coleridge's "equivocation" and artful rhetoric and playfulness fit in nicely with the skeptical hypothesis as well as the "psychology" of the outsider. Lamb's Elia writings also fit in nicely with Reiman's thesis. The psychological analysis of Wordsworth's desire for community as a constant thread in the development of his writing and thought is subtle and interesting in showing the continuity within the discontinuity, with community—in its various incarnations—as a refuge from alienation. The Shelley chapter emphasizes Peacock's skeptical influence in an unprecedented way. The Keats chapter is an effective expansion of the previously published essay on the humanistic dilemma and the final chapter is a canonizing of Byron's *Don Juan* as the greatest Romantic poem, the ultimately skeptical poem which affirms nothing but represents "everything."

In terms of canon and evaluation, Reiman's skeptical legacy is very different from Bloom's visionary company, within which Byron never fit very well. Whereas Blake was for Bloom the ultimate Romantic and visionary, Reiman has not even one chapter on Blake. As is obvious from the italicized commentary in *Romantic Texts and Contexts*, Bloom has long been on Reiman's mind as a critical antagonist (see, e.g., 322, where Reiman calls Bloom the most gifted critic of the age but also the "lost leader"). It seems to me that Reiman's *Intervals of Inspiration* is to some extent a belated "answer" to Bloom's own synthesis of Romanticism. I mean belated because Paul de Man has replaced Bloom as the most imposing theoretical presence in Romantic studies. As, however, deconstruction announces itself as a form of skeptical inquiry, Reiman's own appropriation of skepticism is also a gesture in that direction, which is quite explicit at one point where he refers to "mere rhetorical analysis" as less significant than "literary studies that involve the lives and creative impulses of the authors" (xv).

Before concluding this review, I wish to take note of the surprisingly numerous typos in *Intervals of Inspiration*. As a stickler for careful proofreading, Reiman has to be concerned by the quantity of misprints. Secondly, I would like to comment if only briefly on the old and new historicisms. A new historicist would probably refrain from explicitly canonizing any single work as Reiman does with *Don Juan*. Nor would a new historicist be so slighting of "marginal" figures not at the center of the skeptical project—someone like Blake for example. Furthermore, a new historicist, in stabilizing literary meaning, would stress ideology or broader socio-historical factors more, and psycho-biography less; more contradiction, less coherence. Even so, the real differences are not as substantial as the different labels would lead one to be-

lieve. New historicists do their own canonizing, even if they are not as unabashed about it as is Reiman. Despite differences in substance and style, I am struck by how much the two have in common, especially when one compares any kind of historicism with the explicitly anti-historical procedures of deconstruction and other modes of formalism.

Reiman's two books will hardly settle the battle of the books over competing literary theories but these books articulate forcefully a particular approach to Romantic literature that cannot be ignored and that Romanticists of all critical persuasions will find useful.

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Michael Scrivener

L'Entreprise mélodramatique, by Julia Przybos. Paris: José Corti, 1987. Pp. 194. \$35.00 (paper).

This study of French melodrama of the early nineteenth century is indeed an ambitious undertaking. It attempts to examine the social, material, and aesthetic conditions of melodrama's production, to provide a theoretical explanation for its popularity, to identify its significance as a representation of French conscience of the early 1800's, to offer a close reading of a "typical" text, and to assemble a network of interpretive models that will explain melodrama's conventions. The result is a work that is frequently interesting and suggestive, but that lacks some consistency and the coherence of a controlling thesis or methodology.

Early chapters provide a useful documentation of historical facts. The author appears to have read not only all the available plays written between 1800 and 1830, but also most of the newspapers, chronicles, theatrical dictionaries, memoirs and even production records of specific theaters. The text is studded with anecdotes (employers complained of worker absenteeism because of Monday matinees), statistics on prices, attendance, production runs, and repertoires. It offers glimpses of the theaters and theater district, refreshment concessions, advertising strategies, the dress of the audience, spectator reaction during representations, reviews of specific successes and flops, and more. We have a picture of melodrama as a commercial venture (a popular and financial success), insights on how the plays were written (usually "manufactured" in a few days, with imitation, plagiarism and a constant renewal of "special effects" as the norm), and examples of how audience reception determined revisions.

Chapters three through five develop a socio-political and theoretical framework for understanding the melodrama based primarily on Girard's scapegoat model. Stated briefly, the argument here is that the highly conventional social, religious and moral hierarchy of the melodrama represents a nostalgia on the part of the early nineteenth-century public for a return to the stable structures and values of the Ancien Régime (hierarchized classes, patriarchy and Christian ethics). The dramatic conflict of the play, triggered when the villain falsely accuses an innocent victim of some crime, introduces general

confusion, disorder and upheaval in the community and in nature and represents the violence and "transgressions" of the Revolution. Social and moral harmony are reinstated when the villain is unmasked, usually by a representative of divine justice, and banished from the community, an act that for the viewing public represents both a ritual purging of "revolutionary" impulses or memories and a celebration of pre-Revolutionary ideology. Historically, this would reflect the restoration of the Bourbons and a return to peace, harmony and reconciliation. Although the author does not establish a convincing argument as to how this ideology relates to the particular class structure and changing conflicts of the period, her model does offer a comprehensive scheme for identifying the primary conflict and its underlying ideology in the plays she examines. Details of this conflict and its ideology are provided through a close examination of Victor Ducange's *Thérèse, ou l'orpheline de Genève* (1820).

The analysis of this play at the same time attempts to outline the conventions and formal structures of the melodramatic genre. Plot will dramatize the scapegoat scenario previously announced, characters and costumes will primarily symbolize moral categories (victim, traitor, saviour and community), decor and stage space (castle, garden, country) will most often represent social relationships, while the quality of speech itself (inarticulate for the victim, eloquent for the traitor, "truthful" for the savior) will echo these categories. Much effort in these discussions is spent invoking theoretical or critical models that will support or justify the author's analysis. For example, the fact that the victim does not defend him or herself against accusations is due either to mutism, to the inability of the community to recognize his or her innocence, or to the "scandal" of the truth—she was raped by a priest—and can be seen, in communication theory, as a "fault" in either the "*destinateur*," the "*destinataire*" or the "*message*." Similarly, an elaborate "semiotic" analysis of costumes reveals that black is the color of the villain, white that of innocence and gray the moral fluctuations of the community. The problem is not that such applications are incorrect, or that they frequently reveal only the obvious, but rather that they are applied in an *ad hoc* way and consistently fragment rather than reinforce the theoretical framework of the study. At the same time, two important theoretical works dealing directly with French melodrama (Brooks, 1976; Prendergast, 1978) are all but ignored.

Chapters seven and eight examine communication models in melodrama, emphasizing particularly the role of the spectator. Speech (along with other signifying systems) in the theater involves two "circuits" for transmitting information, first, the circuit for "fictional" communication between the characters (actors) on the stage, and, secondly, the circuit for messages directed primarily at the audience. In melodrama, it is argued, the second circuit regularly places the spectator in a condition of knowledge superior to that of the characters, to the point that the audience anticipates not only the elements of the dramatic conflict but its solution as well. How, then, it is asked, in the face of such clichés and pre-ordained outcomes, is audience interest or "pleasure" sustained? By a balanced distribution of "intellectual" and "emotional" episodes, the latter orchestrated by the participation of the "*claque*." The last chapter considers melodrama as a work of moral, social and political propaganda and concludes, with references to Durkheim, by propos-

ing the spectacle of melodrama as a ritualistic event in which individuals re-experience their society and the relationships they have with it. In nineteenth-century France, however, the ceremony has the additional characteristic of being an economically controlled enterprise.

Although much of its borrowed theoretical apparatus is inconsequential, this study is nevertheless informative and makes a useful contribution to our understanding of French melodrama in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

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Gerald Mead

The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism by Kathleen C. Boone. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1989. Pp. 139. \$34.50 (cloth), \$10.95 (paper).

When the American intelligentsia regards "fundamentalism" at all, its several responses bear an odd commonality. At times it assumes the posture of some late Byzantine emperors, peering nervously over the walls at the invading Ostrogoth hordes, perfumed handkerchiefs pressed tight to noses. At other times it recalls the jaded sophisticate's amusement with elaborately staged carnival entertainments put on by countrified fools. When considered "seriously," as with Martin Marty and company's recently heralded efforts, the result is a massively ponderous five-year plan aimed at explaining this "phenomenon." Seemingly different, all these responses have at base the same essential: that these people are *other*. Dangerously so, comically so—they are not us. It is a convenient and dismissive reading, made easily available to us by the repetitive foci of the electronic media's spectacles, but while Imelda Marcos's shoes seem a perfectly adequate symbol for that particular brand of eighties madness, Tammy Faye Bakker's mascara, somehow, does not.

The penetration of that cosmetic facade, whoever may bear responsibility for its application, is one of the avowed aims of this book. It is at first glance curious in its use of Foucault as theoretical backing, in that his work is so usable, so manipulable, that Foucauldian insight might serve as the same resource of authoritative appeal here that the Bible does for fundamentalists. But Boone's approach is sustained by the knowing irony that it is just this importation of authority, the ground of a stance for speaking, that is under investigation. Such a conception also allows the wicked juxtaposition on adjoining pages of Foucault and Falwell, thus demonstrating that this book's theoretical purport is larger than the popular conception of its subject. In a way, the syntax of the subtitle is misleading, in that while it promises what the book delivers, an analysis of the discourse of fundamentalism, the particularities of that analysis should not obscure Boone's major point: that protestant fundamentalism is itself a discourse; in Foucault's multivalent senses of that word, as it loops away from individual control, it is multitextual, fleeting, interlocked. It is this recognition that underscores the book's essentially ironic stance, in that the mechanism for proclaiming interpretive inerrancy,

the hallmark of fundamentalism, is itself revealed to be its own systematic opposite.

The trail of Boone's argument begins with the identification of E. D. Hirsch's demand for the determinacy of meaning in *Validity in Interpretation* with the demand for biblical inerrancy on the part of fundamentalist discourse, an assertion that would have seemed strange and perhaps unfair before the publication of *Cultural Literacy*, but not afterward. Countered to this are Stanley Fish's notion of competing interpretive communities, and Foucault on the exigencies of discourse. While the full richness of these theories is necessarily somewhat flattened here by abbreviation, they are by no means off the mark, and their presentation as dynamic oppositions forms the groundwork for an extended discussion of the "theological" issue of biblical inerrancy, ending with the paradoxical realization that one seeking inerrancy is left instead only with "rules and strategies" of reading. Boone's painstaking examination of the paradoxes at the heart of fundamentalism—hyper-rational anti-intellectualism, a peculiarly metaphoric literalism—forms one of the chief rewards of this book, and allows her to offer striking explanations of the belief in the millennium and the rapture that go beyond the socio-psychological to the ground of Bible belief as essential and "fundamental," even to the extent of explaining the contradictions of a fundamentalist call to political action in a world that is bound by revelation to end soon and in chaos.

Boone's analysis of the particulars of fundamentalism ranges from the persistent interpretive energy exercised by the Scofield Bible (despite inerrancy and the common man's apprehension), the use of jargon and clichés, institutional activity, and fundamentalist insularity, to the specifics of organizational, witnessing and counseling practices, and the careful construction and maintenance of the pastor's persona. The book is heavily documented, rigorously and patiently argued, reliant on such previous studies as James Barr's *Fundamentalism* but wide enough in scope to engage H. L. Mencken and Mark Twain's *Letters to the Earth*. As interesting as these minutiae are, however, their import pales beside Boone's more general thesis that Protestant fundamentalism is not by any means a set of theological dogmas, but is instead a dynamic, adaptable interpretive strategy. Through close readings of various positions and posturings of fundamentalists (the wittiest of which is a clever close reading of close readings of Revelations 9), Boone shows that their sometimes wild statements are logical extensions and products of an interpretive methodology, in fact a kind of critical theory of the Bible—what she terms "a tyranny of interpretation, in which authoritative interpreters are able to exercise power over their subjects by effacing the distinction between text and interpretation."

As postscript, there is to be found here as well the suggestion that, in the attention to the machinery of the author's authority, the unique status conferred upon the text itself, and appeals to that text as ratification for interpretations levied upon it, some movements of contemporary critical theory mirror fundamentalism. Thus, if this book reveals the irony of fundamentalists as themselves operating within discourse, it reveals as well the matter of literary theorists operating within and upon the fundamentalist dilemma. It is a glimpse only, tantalizingly provoked, but not followed up. Its extension

would seem to require some notice of the apparent heterodoxy and studied avoidance of authoritarian positions within recent critical theory, and an addressing of the question whether the search for meaning contains the impulse of its own destruction, hidden in multiplicity and deferral. But that is a move from discourse analysis to deconstruction, and would be undertaken perhaps by one not only not saved, but irredeemably and gleefully lost.

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