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Find You the Virtue: Ethics, Image, and Desire in Literature by Irving Massey. Fairfax, VA: The George Mason University Press, 1987. Pp. xxiv + 263.

If we are going to write or speak, we should begin to realize that our involvement in language and literature has double consequences, consequences both imaginative and ethical. This condition grounds Irving Massey's mapping of the confluence of the topics of his latest book's subtitle—ethics, image, desire, and literature—and serves as an axiomatic, moral source for a criticism urging vision, or rather *double* vision; a criticism that turns on and repeatedly turns to metaphor, that prizes metaphoricity as an ethical force.

Massey's task follows Alexander Pope's injunction in the Epilogue to the *Satires*: "Find you the Virtue, and I'll find the Verse." His effort is somewhat singular: in the critical discourse against which Massey at times defines his arguments—structuralist poetics, the post-structuralist work of Derrida, Girard, and J.-F. Lyotard—the "virtuous" or the "ethical" has not notably been brought into play, or at least brought in to play a central role (though in his more recent work Lyotard has involved the question of representability with that of political justice). Massey begins with the (not rhetorical) question, "What is literature good for?" He suggests in his first chapter that literature prods us to meditate on the ways thought and image may link to language. Massey admits language's tendency to move from fidelity to the "natural movement of the mind," which is "from image to image," an associative movement (p. 6), by formalizing or reifying itself. He points out, in a characterization of language's "metalinguistic" tendencies that easily can be read to apprehend both structuralist and deconstructive projects, that language can become "preoccupied with itself as structure," or "preoccupied with itself as signifier . . . becoming enmeshed in a self-questioning, reflexive mode of operation that proceeds as though it could reach behind the sources of thought, though in fact all it can grasp is those structures which it has invented for itself to grasp" (p. 2). Against these tendencies, Massey urges an attentiveness to metaphor. Metaphor mediates image, word, and thought, allowing the "fixing of an essence by a vehicle," without which, Massey holds, "meaning can never take shape for us. The surface of reality shimmers with meanings for us. . . . And words appear together with those meanings" (p. 8). Metaphor's words mediate thought's images; they are captions that articulate images as images rise from the silence of thought to speech. Remarkably, Massey names the condition of access to such speaking images the "erotic state," a capacity for metaphoricity offered to us by love: "Love permits the latent comparisons in us to ripen, complete themselves, rise to the surface, and be put to use" (p. 9); hence metaphor's ethical force.

For Massey, much of literature concerns itself with having or not having access to this privileged erotic condition. He quotes Christopher Smart's lines, "There is no rose for minds in grief,/There is no lily for despair," reading them to mean that not only is there "no way for the unhappy man to experience the rose and the lily," but also that there is no way for him even "to know or *think* them. . . . The unhappy man, since he has no access to metaphor, has no access to meaning" (p. 9). In fact, Massey reads *Hamlet* as the tragedy of an inability to use metaphor to unite image and word, which, Massey carefully argues, are profoundly disjoined throughout the play.

As a sequel to or reversal of what happens in *Hamlet*, Tolstoy's "Death of Ivan Ilyich" is read by Massey as an evasion of fiction and a triumph of metaphor. Massey contends that Tolstoy, in creating the fiction, dealt with strains of aggression and weakness that may be inherent in writing: in other words, with certain conventional but unethical fictional forces. These include, first, an ambivalent sympathy of writer and reader with fictional characters' suffering: one is supposed to share and enjoy a protagonist's pain, with the eventual "understanding" or "realization" that the suffering is "justified," as writer and reader—and, Massey adds, critic—collude to work out the protagonist's problem temporally, through devices such as "plot" and "character," "recognition" and "discovery." Against this Aristotelian strategy we have Tolstoy's anti-fictional fiction, which begins with its hero already dead and the "moral" of his life given away at the outset, countering the expectations of both temporal patterning and the "moral" purgation effected through it. What remains for the reader to "discover" in the story is not a "moral" but the moral value of metaphoricality. Tolstoy's Dickensian animation of the furniture surrounding Ivan Ilyich's corpse leads Massey to remark that the funeral scene is the "world of newly released metaphor, the freshly discovered, relaxed, humorous world of the imagination, where the tables can be turned on the people, the illustrations can come alive. . . . Ivan Ilyich has redeemed his world—metaphorized it—made it poetic. . . ." (p. 67).

Of course, even in such subversive fiction, reading and interpretation remain "problem-solving" activities. But, Massey argues, while the "solution" of the fictional problem is always predetermined, the solution of metaphor entails discovery of a second term or terms of a comparison that is never pre-existent and that "must always be newly identified for the occasion" (p. 63). Metaphor may elicit but it does not impose meaning. The notion of imposition is crucial because what really troubles Massey about fiction and criticism, it seems, is force. He offers, as an alternative to the coercive strains of fiction and interpretation, a reading and writing, perhaps a criticism, that is not directed or pre-selective, but receptive, responsive, and "effortless." When, for example, he comments on the Grimms' tale of "The Frog King, or Iron Henry" (pp. 120–130), Massey focuses on what happens in the story *after* its familiar plot has run its course and the frog-prince has been released from his enchantment. Once the prince is free, his servant, Henry, is happy, and the bands with which Henry had bound his heart, to prevent its breaking from sorrow upon his master's enchantment, break of their own accord. Massey writes: "The snapping of the bonds around Iron Henry's heart . . . is the relief from the suspense we have been feeling in the framed story, which, despite the ostensibly happy ending, can have no adequate outlet within that story. In fact, the tension we have been enduring in the story . . . is relieved by our being thrown back into a space before *any* stories, a space out of which the labor of stories comes. . . . The snapping of the bonds is a reminder that story can be effortless, even more effortless than the wish-fulfillment that the story first tells us was possible at the time of its action; finally, that the ethical, too, can be effortless" (p. 121). The bond's snapping separates the mythic or fictional realm—of treachery, deceit, and the prince's uneasiness and anxiety after his "release"—from an ethical space, where Henry's love bursts forth. The tale leaps from a world of binding, with "plenty of violence" to one where there is only "un-binding" non-violence.

This is an eschatological move; indeed, Massey refers to it as an "ethical apocalypse" (p. 130). And, he opposes this ethical potential expressly to the sort of deconstructive power attributed to literature by René Girard. To Girard's contention that literature may see through myth's blindness (*méconnaissance*) to the force and structuring capacity of an originary violence, Massey responds that "Girard leaves us with nothing but transcendence as a way of avoiding the implications of that deconstruction and of the recurrent mythic violence that it reveals: a cycle of crises that only another act of violence—scapegoating—can interrupt" (p. 129). Actually, both Massey and Girard seem to be talking about a *suspension* of violence, and though that suspension may be more apparently temporary in Girard's system, one could call both Massey's and Girard's schemes apocalyptic in the sense that the resolution of the violent crisis is always unexpected: there is no program prescribing when it will occur. Massey is still faced with the problem that the suppression of violent mythical or fictional forces by the ethical itself can, as he himself puts it, create "an atmosphere of tension or violence that is itself a distillation of the fictional atmosphere" (p. 69).

Massey also wants to step aside from violence more specifically on the level of the image. In a chapter aimed at the "rehabilitation" of the image, he argues that image need not be perceived as dangerously false, derivative, or reductive, or, as an iconoclastic tradition that Massey traces from the writers of the Hebrew Bible to Walter Benjamin would hold, inherently unable to represent or partake of the Good. Expressly in response to Lyotard's contention that "figure" always carries the stamp of a *violence initiale*, Massey promotes the possibility of a creative, productive, "easeful" image. He speaks of image not merely as representational, as a forced abstraction or trace left by an elusive presence, but more as an improvement of or supplement—and not a *bad* supplement—to experience. Images are midwives to ideas, and they can facilitate connections and community, because part of every image "is not an image of something external to itself, but is *cast forward from the self*" (p. 139) to another responsive mind. Images therefore can sustain a dialogue *aimed at truth*: "An image launched toward another speaker . . . keeps the provisional nature of truth—something riding on an image—evident. The wheels of one's interlocutor's mind may spin when he is confronted with an image, but he will recognize its merely human quality as something that has only provisional status in the discourse of the speaker. And the image is in turn a kind of flywheel that balances and sustains the motion of thought between two minds; in its absence, one cannot even really tell what one is thinking, or what to think next" (p. 145).

The problem is that though images may span a chasm of discontinuity between thoughts and an alienation between thinkers, they also may not. For images, while mediating discontinuity, also seem to reveal it. What may be most striking about the capacity for imagining or for metaphoric vision, or about what it's like to experience the "effortless" composition of music (such as the haunting melody sketched on p. 114) or the epiphany of an "easeful" image, is the difference of such experiences from those we normally have access to, be it through thought, language, or metalanguage. Massey's account with commentary of how, on at least one personal occasion a "significant particular" germinated for him as he stopped under a willow tree in Buffalo's

Delaware Park (pp. 32–33) impresses, though it also hints that one's having that certain "surge of vision" depends not only on one's receptivity but also, of course, on freedom, chance, and grace. For the one who cannot see doubly—to use one of Massey's best examples, the one who looks at leaves and sees only leaves, not something else, like leather—or for the one who *does* see metaphorically but in nightmare rather than dream images, there may be no hope; or, hope is all there may be. Massey's stance beneath the tree is, crucially, one of "hope that the tree is going to do something for me" (p. 32).

Massey's estimate of the worth of the gift that spurs the metaphoric imagination is most strikingly conveyed in his chapter on the Yiddish poetry of the Holocaust, where he implies that the value of poetic vision increases almost directly in proportion to how horrifying literal reality becomes. Massey translates a poem by A. Sutzkever written in the Vilna Ghetto in 1943 to a child poisoned by the Nazis: the child's body cools "Between my fingers/As if I were pressing/A warm glass of tea,/Feeling it grow cold"; the dying child is a "gift to the snow," a "sliver of sunset" sinking into the snow's depths, carrying "greetings to the frozen grass." Metaphors of ethical bonds—a ring, a link in a chain—describe the child, but primarily to convey through image the rupture of those bonds, their presence and their disappearance. The poetic image can repair itself and restore the wholeness of the world even when—or precisely when—there is no continuity or integrity and we seem to be shut out from the ethical. "Even in this postliterate, post-aesthetic, and possible postethical age, we all continue to seek out art, with its unnameable ethical satisfactions, ambiguous as the very status of ethics may be," Massey concludes (p. 189).

So *Find You the Virtue* remains resolutely urgent but not prescriptive. The book's "scandal" is that despite its numerous close readings of literary texts, it offers nothing systematic and in fact goes out of its way to subvert systematic critical reading and discourse (as in the arguments for "prospective" and against "retrospective" readings of poetry in Chapter One). The book's "force" lies in the author's ability to interpret instances from literature and life so as to convey something of the intensity of the bonds between ethical action and the capacity for vision.

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Romantic Vision in the Novel by Jay Clayton. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Pp. x + 249. \$34.50.

The ineffable union between Cathy and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, Little Nell's liminal status in *Little Dorrit*, Dinah's embodiment of visionary power in *Adam Bede* create moments where narrative is disrupted by the transcendent. Such crises constitute the subject of Jay Clayton's *Romantic Vision in the Novel*. For Romantic vision to enter the novel, the ordinary and the everyday—the epistemological basis of the novel's verisimilitude—what E.M. Forster calls the "furniture of common sense"—must be violated. The transcendent not only glaringly intrudes upon the solid ground represented

in the novel, but actually threatens the very coherence of the genre. The violence of such "Romantic intrusions" (2) provides the impetus for Clayton's study, the first book length account of Romantic transcendence in the English novel.

Though he examines thematic continuity in Romantic poetry and novels, Clayton's chief concern is structural because for him the visionary is most forcefully depicted in the movement between structures rather than within any particular generic feature. This in-between space he labels "liminal." Though at times retracing ground first trod by Geoffrey Hartman, Clayton's discussion of the uncanny and Wordsworth marks an especially provocative theme that surfaces in a number of chapters. While acknowledging his predecessors on this subject—Victor Turner, Freud, Hartman, J. Hillis Miller and others—Clayton's sense of liminality is his most central concern for he conceives transcendence as "a boundary phenomenon" (47). He measures the "violence of transcendence" (2) in the fate of protagonists who embody a Romantic ideal, in the very notions of narrative and character, as well as in the structure of the novel. Visionary experience disrupts "representation, sequence, and character," three topics used by Shelley to distinguish stories from poems. While Clayton warns that "an authentic moment of transcendence can call into question the very premises upon which a realistic novel depends" (2), his study reveals how the power and insight of Romantic vision have been harnessed by major nineteenth century novelists.

Wordsworth and Shelley are the poets credited with most directly influencing the novels under consideration, which include *Mansfield Park*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Little Dorrit*, *Adam Bede* and *Women in Love*. But Clayton's argument suffers from the limitations set by his opening gesture of privileging the visionary moments in Wordsworth and Shelley: by confining his poets to these two and ignoring Coleridge and Blake, for instance, Clayton reduces the complexity of Romantic poetics. Coleridge and Blake toiled to integrate the visionary and the mundane, and feared a poetics that excluded the ethical. By polarizing the mundane and visionary rather than seeing them in dialectic relation, Clayton avoids a needed discussion of how they interact. Clayton's governing theoretical premises often delimit his analyses, which, while accurate and provocative in many ways, avoid the ethical impasse the Romantics faced in representing visionary experiences.

Romantic Vision in the Novel begins with a novel that influenced rather than was influenced by Romanticism. *Clarissa*, Clayton argues, "anticipates the Romantic problem of how to accommodate a transcendent dimension of character within the formal conditions of narrative" (28). He defines the poetic quality of *Clarissa*'s radical transformation as involving "six elements" common to visionary experiences—the "loss of sight," "access to a realm beyond language," "slowing or arrest of action," "disappearance of ordinary time," "transformation of character," and "direct encounter with the numinous" (8). Clayton sees *Clarissa* as representative of the problem of whether "transcendent experiences of characters in literature [are] signs of spiritual triumph or . . . the defensive gestures of embattled selves" (44). *Clarissa*'s withdrawal from the external world during her slow death can be understood as a happy turn toward God or as "a lapse into the solipsism that had always threatened her." He focuses his discussion on *Clarissa*'s exemplary virtue,

which involves a "heightened sense of consciousness" (32), a ceaseless "self-accountability" (33). Clayton might have noted that the such self-concentration will later be a central problem faced by the Romantics. But instead, he applauds it as a convincing depiction of a visionary experience within a novel celebrated for its finely detailed depiction of the mundane. Although Clayton, like Romantic critics, appreciates the ending of a novel that has bored so many undergraduates and baffled so many critics, he sets the visionary and the mundane in opposition, thereby ignoring the interaction that the Romantics envisioned between them. The complexities of this dialectic can help adjudicate various critical reactions to the ending of Richardson's novel.

Critics following Christopher Hill have viewed the ending of the novel as a failure to come up with a social program to replace the one *Clarissa* so skillfully critiques. Lee Edwards, though not cited by Clayton, offers a representative critique of the ending. It cannot "provoke social or structural reform" because it finally only re-enforces the patriarchal structure that was the source of *Clarissa's* problems in the first place (*Psyche as Hero*, 47). What Edwards reads as a failure and Clayton as a triumph, I view in a different way. Richardson powerfully represents the conflict between the solitary sublime and committed social action, depicting the necessary failure of a balanced integration of the two. That *Clarissa* cannot fully participate in society because of the very perfection of her virtue, which is self- rather than other-regarding, anticipates an important Romantic problematic that Clayton unfortunately neglects. Coleridge and Mary Shelley, for instance, both worried about the necessary isolation of the sublime experience. In such poems as "Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement," "Fears in Solitude," and "Lines written in the Album at Elbingerode, in the Hartz Forest," Coleridge reveals how the solitary sublime experience conflicts with the poet's desire to participate in society, to join the "bloodless fight" of "honourable toil." Mary Shelley, in *Frankenstein*, cautions that the sublime encourages one "to forget the passing cares of life." The Romantic's isolation ("the presence of another would destroy the solitary grandeur" of the sublime experience, her Romantic hero complains) ultimately produces monsters. *Clarissa's* virtue that finally can find no place in the social world leaves her in the ominous rapture and glory of the solitary sublime. The transcendent final movement of *Clarissa*, then, would interest the Romantics not only for its moments of pure poetry, but also for the dilemma it posits of not being able to socialize transcendence. *Clarissa*, the would-be moral exemplar, ends up triumphing in solitary splendor. In focusing solely upon transcendence, Clayton ignores the Romantics's deep concern with ethics, as their preoccupation with the isolating aspect of the sublime makes clear.

It must be noted that Clayton keeps good company when he sees the Romantics choosing "the pleasures of solitude" over "the value of community" (62). Jane Austen's criticism of Romanticism is that it trivializes the social self. Clayton's chapter on Austen has the ambitious goal of clarifying her "position in literary history by examining her opposition to Romanticism, particularly as evidenced in her treatment . . . of Romantic visionary experience" (61). Clayton begins by warning against recent critical attempts to portray Austen as a Romantic. Taking *Mansfield Park* as his text, he shows ways in which potential Romantic moments are undercut and disappointed, as the

solitary is rejected for the social. Austen creates situations that anticipate epiphanic experiences but, instead of allowing the protagonist to luxuriate in static, solitary moments of self-reflection, these moments turn out to be powerful dramatic occasions that propel the plot; the emphasis lands on drama, not on feeling. Clayton offers an exciting Keatsian reading of Austen, demonstrating the underlying dramatic quality of the novelist; both Keats and Austen have been described as Shakespearean in this regard. Keats' definition of poetical character as "the most unpoetical of any thing in existence" fits, shows Clayton, "Austen's dramatic imagination." The problem with this provocative comparison is that Clayton ends up reversing his original claims of Austen as critic of Romanticism. As he reveals Austen's close affinities with one of the great Romantics's central proclivities and techniques, Clayton unwittingly reveals Keats inside Austen and reveals her relevance to Keats's critique of Wordsworth. By aligning Austen with Keats against Wordsworth, Clayton demonstrates the complexity of Romanticism that he ignores when he takes for his point of departure such a strictly visionary definition of Romanticism.

When Clayton asks what happens to a novel, a genre based on "the ordinary and the everyday" (1), when confronted with the extraordinary of Romantic experience, his very terms neglect an important part of Romanticism. He ignores the interpenetration of the ordinary and transcendent and the anxiety created when this dialectic collapses into solipsism. Equally important to a discussion of Romanticism and the novel would be a critical account of the ways in which the novel is continuous with important features of Romanticism spelled out by Wordsworth in the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Here he describes the subject of his poetry as "incidents and situations from common life" depicted in "language really used by men." Likewise, not only does Clayton reduce Romanticism to the visionary, but also he chooses works that are for the most part quite conventional in form and therefore make a neat opposition to Romanticism. He might have treated Romantic novels such as *Frankenstein* and *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, which at once celebrate and critique Romanticism, as well as contemporary novels of "magic realism" that have easily accommodated the type of experience that Clayton sees as so antithetical to the novel. Likewise, Clayton might have considered William Blake who perhaps alone among the Romantics (or perhaps along with Dorothy Wordsworth) viewed the sublime as continuous with the ordinary, whose concerns were deeply social but whose poetry at its most socially committed moments never loses intensity. Blake, who depicted "Visions of Eternity" to "rouse the faculties to act," might have served Clayton as an example of transcendence that does not disrupt, that includes an ethical as well as aesthetic program. Forster's description of the novel as "sogged with humanity" could just as well describe an essential part of Romantic poetry. *Romantic Vision in the Novel*, although hobbled by a reductive view of Romanticism, nevertheless is a stimulating, inaugural work that opens up a valuable field of inquiry for further research.

Surrealism and the Book by Renée Riese Hubert. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1988. Pp. xvii + 358. \$65.00.

Renée Riese Hubert's *Surrealism and the Book* advances a complicated argument, describing a particular kind of artistic object, the *livre de peintre* created by one or more surrealist artists, and at the same time presenting a revisionist view of surrealism itself. Her method is to construct a "grid" of types of surrealist book illustration, and to make substantial analyses of particular exemplars of each of her types. Thus she does not survey the history of surrealist book illustration so much as she explores the nature of surrealism by analysis of surrealist objects. Hubert makes a large claim for the surrealist *livre de peintre* as an ideal surrealist kind of work, involving as it does "collaboration," either direct and contemporaneous or indirect and after the fact, of at least two artists, each of whose invention is stimulated and freed by that of the other.

In staking out her particular territory, Hubert moves briskly through the history of book illustration and of surrealism, providing distinctions among various modernist concepts of artistic production. The cubists' motives for breaking away from realism were "aesthetic"; the Dadaists', "impish subversion"; and the surrealists', a "constructive, . . . practical . . . approach to the dream world" (p. 6). By such a strategy, Hubert can enlarge the boundaries of surrealism beyond a specific movement (ordinarily seen beginning as an outgrowth of Dada in 1924, with Breton's first "Surrealist Manifesto," and ending with World War II), to a continuing artistic principle and method. In its copious inclusiveness, her book can be contrasted on the one hand with Lothar Lang's *Expressionist Book Illustration in Germany, 1907-1927* (tr. Janet Seligman, Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), which does stay within the accepted temporal boundaries and presents a more conventional "history," and on the other hand with Gérard Bertrand's *L'illustration de la poésie à l'époque du Cubisme, 1909-1914* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), which subjects its few exemplars to a very detailed aesthetic/philosophical inquiry.

For Hubert, surrealism in art is not just "automatism," but a dialectic of paradox, "surprising juxtaposition," a productive tension: in the *livre de peintre*, a tension between word and image. The illustrations are for her "metatexts" (p. 23), and her aim is to discover "salient features" of exchange between text and picture. Metamorphosis is the prevalent theme of the works studied, as the ordinary quotidian limits of space and time are broken and reformed and challenged once more, first by the imagination of the artists and again by the reader/viewer of the work.

Hubert's opening analyses, of Michel Leiris and André Masson's *Simulacre* (1925), Benjamin Péret and Yves Tanguy's *Dormir, dormir dans les pierres* (1927) and Paul Eluard and Max Ernst's *Au défaut du silence* (1925), deal with illustrations after the fact of surrealist verbal texts. Their strategies vary. Leiris uses a vocabulary of motion and shapes—curves, "trajectory," "undulates," "abysses"—that is echoed in Masson's juxtaposition of rigid architectural forms to fluid, organic ones. Similarly, in Tanguy, mobility and changeability characterize "unreal" landscapes, while "Péret's landscapes or dreamscapes are based on the complete interchangeability between the natural world and the body" (p. 39). In these early surrealist books, "mimesis holds its own," as "the painter seeks to remain faithful to the writer."

In Chapter Two, Hubert takes up three works exemplary of true collaboration, i.e., artist and poet working together: Eluard and Ernst's *Répétitions* and *Les Malheurs des immortels* (both 1922), and Eluard and Man Ray's *Facile* (1935). *Répétitions* plays ironically off its title, with a zany freshness of invention appropriating "everyday" materials in both the prose poems and the collages, while in *Les Malheurs . . .*, for which the collages were completed first and the texts assembled by both artists afterward, "The poets replace, subvert, and invert the exemplary values usually associated with classical mythology" (p. 63). Ernst's typical cut-and-paste of nineteenth-century magazine illustration gives its own peculiar absurd intertextuality and visual style. In a stylistically very different kind of work, Ray's use of "solarization" to manipulate contrasts and outline in his photographs of the beautiful female nude (Eluard's mistress, Nusch) results in pictures at once highly sensual and artistic, sharing page-space with the text of the poems to create paradoxes and tensions.

Hubert's third chapter deals with a number of late surrealist books by dual writer/visual artists: Jean Arp's *Vers le blanc infini* (1960) and *Le Soleil recerclé* (1966); Joan Miró's *Le Léopard aux plumes d'or* (1971) and Max Ernst's *Paramythes* (1949). In Arp's two books, there is no one-to-one correspondence between text and pictures but rather a "parallelism between entities." Arp creates "forms that waver between fluidity and concreteness" (p. 89). The work coheres by "recurrent metaphors and structures" and "rhythmic fluctuations," as the etchings, woodblocks, and poems "manifest the creative gesture in different ways." The Miró book's distinctive handwritten text creates a "reciprocity" of word and image, making the verbal finally "subordinate" to the plastic. In contrast to this organic fusion, Ernst's *Paramythes*—collages and poems—are works in which recognizable figures from classical mythology appear in strange and absurd guise in rather mechanistic illustrations and word games. Although Hubert argues that Miró and Ernst were "destroying the barriers between the two languages," I found her less persuasive here than elsewhere in the book.

Chapter Four deals with texts which are illustrations of pictures, in René Char's *Dent prompte* (1969; after collages of Ernst), André Breton's *Constellations* (1959; after gouaches of Miró); and Eluard's "Les Jeux de la poupée" (1949; collages of Hans Bellmer). Char tries to "transpose" the visual into verbal, responding to "the painter's dominant signs" without reading or deciphering the lithographs (p. 130), and both pictures and text are in "retreat from mimesis." Hubert's discussion of Breton's attractive poems, with their "verbs of expansion and retraction across space" complementing Miró's scintillating compositions from 1941, is one of the most illuminating and exuberant in the book.

The notorious Bellmer doll, with its multiple limbs, breasts, and buttocks configured and reconfigured from one manifestation to the next, is photographed in various more or less surreal settings in a series of visual works that evolved from the mid-thirties to 1949, in conjunction with Eluard's texts. The doll is related to other surrealist mannequins (such as those of Chirico) in illustrating both depersonalization and a principle of endless variation. "Les Jeux" are the "games of disassembling and reassembling language and images" (p. 141) the two artists indulge in. Eluard neither narrates nor de-

scribes, but "adds a richly filtered textuality to the game initiated by Bellmer's configurations" (p. 145).

At this point Hubert makes an excursion into the 19th century to consider surrealist visual artists' responses to proto-surrealist texts of earlier generations, such as Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater* (an essay), illustrated (naturally enough) by Bellmer (1970) and S.W. Hayter (1972). Ernst compounds the intertextual melange in *Paysage marin avec capucin* (1971) by using texts of Kleist, Arnim, and Brentano commenting on an earlier painting by Caspar David Friedrich with the same title (p. 164), with his illustrations apparently referring to Arnim and Brentano's discussion of bourgeois reception of Friedrich.

Ernst also illustrated Lewis Carroll's *Wunderhorn* (1970), "providing responses to the problematics raised by Carroll" (p. 176), giving "visual expression to issues that surface as . . . syllogism, time, meaning, and other problems of language." Unlike earlier illustrations, such as those of Tenniel, Dalí's illustrations to *Alice in Wonderland* complement the text rather than submitting to it (p. 187). More inventive are the illustrations by Magritte and Dalí to Lautréamont's decadent *Les Chants de Maldoror*. Magritte's seventy-five drawings for the *Chants* (1948), including "decorative" initials for the chapters, effect "the transformation from sign to visual image." Dalí's forty-one plates (1933) rarely seem to refer directly to the text, but introduce figures from his other works, such as Alice, Don Quixote, William Tell, and the "Tragic Myth of the Angelus." Dalí "reduces the poet to the creation of fertile metaphor on which he can graphically gloss at will" (p. 218). Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer* provided a text for André Masson (1961) and Sebastian Matta (1979), both of whom are seen by Hubert as innovative and free, caring less about the text than about their own projects.

In "The Literature of Commitment," Hubert scrutinizes works outside the surrealist canon but sharing their values and techniques: the collaboration of Aimé Césaire and Wilfredo Lam in the forties on *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* and of Benjamin Péret and Ruffino Tamayo in *Air Mexicain* (1952). These provoke interesting analysis of the problems of "illustrating" political themes and embodying political advocacy. The problem of "Displacement of Narrative" is represented in a chapter discussing Breton and Ray's *Nadja* (1928) and Ernst's "novel" *Une Semaine de bonté* (1934), which consists of a brief text accompanied by 180 collages lacking narrative sequence.

Hubert finds the surrealist book coming into its own only when the movement had officially ended, after World War II (p. 287). The *livres de peintre*, however, undercut the original political thrust of Dada and surrealism by being so expensive that only the wealthy can afford to commission or buy such objects. Hubert discusses four "true" surrealist books: *Parler Seul*, with a text by Tristan Tzara (1945) and pictures by Miró (1950); *A Toute épreuve* by Eluard and Miró (1958, text begun in the late twenties, the 78 illustrations in 1948); *Les Pénalités de l'enfer* by Robert Desnos and Miró (1974), with amusing, inventive typography by Michel Otthoffer; and *Maximiliana* by Iliasz and Ernst (1964).

The final chapter, "Beyond the Book," explores some other manifestations of the relations between texts and surrealist visual art, with analyses of works by Magritte and Joseph Cornell. Hubert's conclusion compares expressionist

and surrealist book reception and summarizes some of the main lines of her thought on the surrealist book. Grateful as I am to Hubert for the delights of the journey and the elegance of the summation, I was left reaching for some way to get comfortable with a critical term that covers such a wide swath of time and—especially—of style. That the stiff, parodic collages of Ernst; the monstrous and realistically obscene dolls of Bellmer; the gorgeous nude photographs of Man Ray; the limp, grotesque landscapes of Tanguy and Dalí; the primly painted but nonsensical canvases of Magritte; the enigmatic boxes of Cornell; and the exuberant, abstract, and imaginary figures of Miró and Arp should all be classifiable as surrealist takes the word so far from the designation of a particular movement and so near a vast comprehensiveness, that I would like to see some discussion of how these styles can be related to one another.

Surrealism and the Book is aimed toward an audience well schooled in modernist art and literature; it is meant to challenge easy assumptions about the nature of surrealism in general. Handsomely produced, it is virtually free of the typographical and factual errors that so frequently mar even the most serious and opulent of contemporary scholarly productions. If it does not answer all the questions it raises, it nevertheless provides access to a body of material that is at once conceptually and visually rich and hard to access, and it treats this material with penetration and *joi de vivre*. It must have been fun to write.

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Suzanne Ferguson

Shakespeare on the American Stage, Vol. 2 by Charles H. Shattuck. Washington: Folger Books, 1987. Pp. 339. Illus. \$65.00.

The second, lavishly illustrated volume of Charles H. Shattuck's history of Shakespeare on the American stage takes the story, as his subtitle records, "From Booth and Barrett to Sothorn and Marlowe." An epilogue records the Shakespeare Tercentenary of 1916.

In the Introduction, Shattuck states his purpose: "not to count the troops, but rather to sort out the major figures, forces, and movements of the time that brought the old way with Shakespeare, the 'Victorian way,' to its climax, ushered it toward oblivion, and thus cleared the ground for the new" (p. 18). His method is not as explicitly described, but chapter titles such as "Classic Acting of Tragedy: The Partnership of Booth and Barrett," "Foreign Visitors and the New Realism," and "End of the Tradition I: Mansfield and Mantrell," suggest that it will produce biographical sketches in which celebrated players will represent stages in a more or less evolutionary model.

Shattuck enriches his lucid narrative with lengthy quotations from newspaper reviews. He places these reviews, especially those of the blustering William Winter and the iconoclastic Nym Crinkle, in a context of contemporary theatrical squabbles. But since he pays less attention to the social contexts in which the players worked, the "forces and movements of the time" appear as a primarily aesthetic revulsion from the abridged texts and scenic

displays of nineteenth-century staging. We do hear that anti-Semitism fueled the hatred with which an "almost uniformly gentile" acting profession regarded the Jewish businessmen of "the Syndicate" which controlled New York theatres in the years before World War I. But we hear nothing of Shakespeare's significance in American Jewish life at the turn of the century. Nor do we hear of the black Shakespearean actors whose struggles and achievements Errol Hill recorded in *Shakespeare in Sable* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1984), though Hill's book may not have appeared in time for Shattuck's use.

Shattuck does discuss the contributions of many women who belonged to the world of nineteenth-century Shakespearean theatre. A chapter on "The Feminization of Shakespeare" includes the Americans Mary Anderson, Anna Cora Mowatt, Margaret Mather, and Cora Brown Potter, along with the Polish-born Helena Modjeska. Of the European actresses who toured in America, Adelaide Neilson, Lilly Lantry, and Sarah Bernhardt also appear in this chapter, while Ellen Terry is discussed with Henry Irving in the chapter on "Foreign Visitors and the New Realism."

It can be difficult for a twentieth-century theatre historian to avoid mocking the illusionistic *mises-en-scène* and the apparently conventionalized declamations which the historical record reveals. But how are we to interpret this record? Simply as the sorry vulgarization of high art in a relentlessly commercial culture? Not only the actor-managers who had to compete with the popular taste for spectacle, but scholars such as H. H. Furness acknowledged valid reasons for what Shattuck calls "violations of the text." Shattuck quotes a letter to Augustin Daly in which Furness writes, "In the name of sanctity why do you think I'll be shocked at any changes which a modern playwright thinks best to make in the omission or transposition of scenes in Shakespeare? His stage is not our stage, his audiences are not our audiences" (p. 84).

Such remarks issue from a consistent aesthetic criterion. Yet Shattuck describes an 1893 all-female *As You Like It* (a benefit for unemployed actresses) without acknowledging this criterion or seeking its ideological implications: "Strange as it must have seemed to hear the formidably whiskered Duke Frederick pipe his threats in a girlish treble, yet the affair netted \$2, 500 for the cause and was accounted an artistic success. Joe Jefferson said he had never seen the play so well done in all its parts" (p. 99). When, in describing Bernhardt's Hamlet, he suggests that she was so "limited by sex, size, and temperament" that she "could not possibly rise to the earnestness of tone or the profound thoughtfulness for which Booth was famous" (p. 141) and when he praises Robert Mantell for bringing back "something half-forgotten . . . during the 'mauve decade' and the rising gentelism of the 1890s—Shakespearean tragedy full-voiced and muscular, driven by masculine power" (p. 231), it becomes evident that Shattuck has equated "feminization" with trivialization.

Despite this privileging of "masculine power," Shattuck provides important materials for feminist critics of Shakespearean performance as well as historians of American culture. He records the transformation of Lady Macbeth from Cushman's virago to Terry's seductress; he describes the new Cleopatra that emerges from Potter's "sensualized" interpretation; he out-

lines for an American context the late nineteenth-century rebellion against the "blanche Ophelia"; and he documents the "Oriental harem" of musicians, singers, and dancers with which Orsino is surrounded in Daly's 1898 production of *Twelfth Night*. Shattuck criticizes the scene for its "glamorized" inauthenticity (p. 84), but racism and sexism demand further analysis.

Shattuck criticizes Irving's sympathetic interpretation of Shylock on the same grounds of inauthenticity. This celebrated production intercalated a scene after Jessica's elopement in which Shylock returns to his empty house, knocks on the door and, as the curtain falls, stands silently waiting for his absent daughter: "With one firm stroke of silent business, Irving *rewrote* the scene, so to speak [emphasis in original], converting the happy fulfillment of a love story (and the rescue of a captive maiden from the Jew-dragon's den) to the pitiful story of a decent, careful father betrayed by a heartless daughter" (p. 162). Shattuck passes silently over the places where Shakespeare's text complicates and partly undermines this anti-Semitic fairy-tale.

Such gaps in the history of Shakespearean staging result from historiographical and critical methods which social and economic historians, theorists of cultural representation, and Shakespearean scholars have severely criticized in recent decades. In submitting Shattuck's work to this criticism, I am admittedly asking for a book Shattuck never intended to write. I ask this because attempts to reconstruct "Shakespeare's intentions" (p. 63) can occlude crucial ideological differences between Daly's harem and Irving's Shylock. They can become weapons in a war between academic theatre historians and Shakespearean productions which, however popularized or feminized, are neither racist, sexist, nor elitist. Shattuck has uncovered rich archival sources and presented them gracefully; perhaps other scholars will deploy these sources for histories which will commemorate not only the "major figures," but those whom Shattuck calls the "other Shakespeares."

Simmons College

Lorraine Helms

Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I by Kevin Sharpe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Pp. xxii + 309. \$49.50.

Kevin Sharpe in this book makes a sustained attempt to rehabilitate the poetry and masques of the Caroline period—or at least (despite the inclusiveness of the title) the works of three court writers. He is concerned to repudiate the charge that his authors were mere sycophants, and to demonstrate their serious engagement with matters of government. He claims that readers have been falsely conditioned in their approach to these writers, especially by the polarization of 'court' and 'country' which he sees as an inaccurate and misleading representation of social and political realities. His defense rests upon the claim that court writers could and did express criticism of the monarch couched in an educative panegyric. After a general introduction, chapters on Davenant, Carew and Townshend as poets are followed by a detailed consideration of their court masques and a (somewhat repetitious) con-

clusion in which the positive case for the poets as apostles of a reasoned belief in the necessity for reciprocal love between monarch and subject is restated.

It is a combative book, and it is certainly valuable to encounter such a determined effort to look carefully at authors and genres traditionally marginalized in literary study. But both its general argument and particular discussion raise many problems. It is, for example, not always clear what Sharpe thinks the court was actually like. On page 13 we are informed that "the licentiousness of James I's court went rapidly out of season," but later we are told that the language of Platonic love "bears little relation to the reality of court promiscuity" (p. 67), and of Carew that his life does not "reflect the image of the court of Charles I as ordered and regulated" (p. 109). In a book so concerned with the origin and accuracy of "images" one looks for a less slippery vantage point. In rather similar fashion the cult of Platonic love figures is described first as a means of the moral reformation of the court, then as a mere misguided fad justly attacked by the poets, finally as a more serious emblem of Charles's absolutist tendencies from which his courtier poets strove (successfully) to redeem him. There is an anxiety in the book, it seems, to rescue the reputation of the court itself which collides uneasily with the need to rehabilitate the poets by focussing on their capacity to articulate what was wrong with it. This becomes even clearer in the masque chapter where his assertion that "the masque as form imposed few constraints" (p. 221) is contradicted a few pages later by his suggestion that neither Townshend nor Carew composed further masques because they felt too limited by the form in the expression of their ideas.

Sharpe's tone throughout the book is aggressive; he casts himself as the historian rescuing literary students from their misperceptions. Unfortunately, perhaps, his own techniques of reading are often rather suspect. In discussing Davenant's *Platonic Lovers*, for example, he justifies his claim that the author is making a serious attack upon the court fashion by quoting the words of Buonalte and of Fredeline (the latter unattributed) as if they were the authoritative voice of the play, whereas the first is a Forman-like provider of love-hiltres and the second an obviously corrupt figure whose comment on the court is fuelled by his own lustful ambition. Criticism offered from these sources is anything but authoritative. So too the lack of any sense of the conventionality of the characters of Theander and Gridonell weakens the points he is trying to build upon them. The first derives from the romance tradition of the naïf lover ignorant of sex, the second is a comic version of the martial man out of place in court affairs. The force of the satire of Platonic Love for the audience is deflected and contained by an awareness of the traditional, stereotypical nature of the characters. This is not to deny that Davenant was making fun of the courtly vogue, but it is to suggest that the reception of that criticism might be rather more complicated than Sharpe indicates, with his unproblematic reading of any statement that suits his purpose as if it came straight from the author's mouth.

Nonetheless, there is much in this chapter which at the very least should persuade us that Davenant needs more serious investigation than he has hitherto been accorded. It is less easy to make this claim for the chapter on Carew, where the tensions inherent in Sharpe's project and the coercive na-

ture of his reading of literature are both more sharply exposed. His claim that "the inculcation of virtue through a poetry of love and nature was Carew's contribution to his age" (p. 147) has the merit of daring novelty, but in order to sustain it Sharpe has to argue that the "libertinism" of much of his poetry is not what it appears. He depends upon a very simple notion of the way a poet's work may be read as a single whole "articulating his view of things," and slips from poem to poem without much interest in the conventions which animate each performance. Such a holistic reading of any Renaissance poet's work is anachronistic since attempts to deduce a personal stance from these essentially rhetorical performances is fraught with difficulty. In the treatment of Carew's eroticism in "The Rapture" recuperation proceeds on two fronts. In the first place Carew's espousal of a love of both body and spirit is taken as a sign of his opposition to court Platonism and so earns him marks on the independence count. But then the poem's celebration of appetite is contained by frequent insistence that since its setting is Elysium it presents a vision of what sexuality would be like in an idealized place, rather than an indulgence in sensual pleasure in reality. Other readers than myself might not be convinced by this reading, but it suits with the way Sharpe consistently needs to idealize the poetry he discusses. So, in considering the country house poems, Sharpe testily dismisses a reading which sees them as ideologically complicit with Caroline absolutism, and thereby resists any attempt to make the poetry speak more than it knows. It is an unwillingness to contemplate contradiction and a refusal to ask more sophisticated ideological questions which impoverish the account of Carew.

The poetry of Townshend is pretty limp stuff, and Sharpe is reduced to some fairly wild over-reading to make it yield up the necessary message for this case. But the chapter on the masques is a different matter. Undoubtedly these works have too often been neglected (but then, until very recently, so have all masques not written by Jonson). Sharpe's rehabilitation rests on three interconnected propositions. First, that praise was not sycophancy but educative panegyric; second, that the antimasques articulate criticism of royal policy that is not simply blown away by the masque itself; third, that the masques were primarily concerned to present an ideal of government rather than a specific view of current events. Though they are forcefully presented none of these claims are unproblematic.

Classical precedent sanctioned the idea of education through praise, but all the authors of this period betrayed anxiety about its capacity to work. The boundary between sycophancy and panegyric is difficult to draw and difficult to sustain. Crucially it depends not upon the intention of the writer but upon the perceptions of the audience, and all masque writers confess in one way or another to doubts about the capacity of their audience to lay hold on the "more remov'd mystery" their work figured. Sharpe claims that the figure of Publius in Townshend's *Albion's Triumph*, who resists the attempts of Platonius to explain how he should read allegorically, is respected and contained within the work as a whole. I cannot see anything but a patrician contempt for his inability to understand—but many critics of the masque, both then and now, would want to take Publius's part, and reject the transcendent claims of myth in favor of a resistant realism. Praise looks like sycophancy if you read it straight, however often one is told that such is not the proper

way to read it. Sharpe, of course, sides with the elite, and pays no attention to the possibility that opposition to the masque in the period might derive from a fundamental clash between views of the way language can properly be read.

His claims for the critical stance offered by Caroline masques are usefully provocative. They rely upon a belief that the antimasques are not simply transcended by the masque proper. The question, however, is how far the generic assumptions of the audience permitted them to take fully on board the critical dimension. It seems to me that the irruption of the mechanicals in *The Triumph of Peace* is a test case. Sharpe wants us to believe that this represents an acknowledgement by the author and a suggestion to the king that all the members of the commonwealth should be respected and incorporated in the harmonious vision. But Sharpe himself seems less than confident with his reading, since he says of Townshend's masque after *Florimene* that "his antimasquers seem out of place in the world of masque in which those of mean condition, as the artisans discover in the *The Triumph of Peace*, belong only to antimasque" (p. 230). It is not that Caroline masques offered no criticism of royal policy, but that the parameters in which advice could be offered were severely restricted. I would myself still want to claim that the Jacobean masque offered rather greater freedom, not least because, as Sharpe states of the later works "what is more striking than the topical pointers in the masques is their failure or reluctance, for the most part, to 'sound to present occasions'" (p. 261). One might wonder whether the reluctance is not partly Sharpe's own—for Martin Butler has recently made a persuasive case for the political immediacy of *The Triumph of Peace* and *Salmacida Spolia*. In the end, however, Sharpe is content to take the masques very much on their own terms. There is a wonderfully appropriate misprint in the quotation from the explanation of the myth of *Salmacida Spolia*:

his majesty . . . seeks by all means to reduce
tempestuous and turbulent natures into a sweet
calm of discord (p. 252)

Sharpe simply does not want to take account of the way many opponents saw the masque precisely as symptom of that which brought about discord, rather than the concord it urgently advocated.

But this is only one example of the way this book consistently fails to enunciate its own ideological position. Martin Butler is berated for importing "his own political passions and commitments" to his account of the 1630s. For all Sharpe's insistence that he is simply the historian telling it how it was, he should know, if he had attended more closely to the literary theorists he approvingly cites, that this is an unsustainable position. The ideology of the past can only be delineated by bringing to bear upon it a different perception enabled by historical distance. Far be it from me to put into Kevin Sharpe's mouth what seems to me to be his ideological position. Let it just be said that his treatment of the relationship between love poetry and questions of political power at no point takes on board questions of gender—though it is these that have made discussions of the issue in the Elizabethan period so fruitful. He seeks to blur the polarities of traditional criticism, to suggest that Milton

and Carew were really not all that far apart. Concomitantly he privileges the critical attitudes of his courtier poets but either ignores totally or marginalizes criticism that came from elsewhere. He claims that a belief in the essentially fallen nature of man belonged to "extreme puritans," despite the evidence of the Articles of Religion or the poetry of the well-connected Herbert. In his epilogue it seems that we are invited to agree that the Civil War was a little local disturbance fuelled by hot-heads or those too ignorant to read the masques properly. Throughout the book the word 'natural' is used unproblematically to describe an hierarchic society. The deconstruction of the no doubt crude binary terms hitherto deployed to explain the conflicts of the period enables a construction of a very limited 'England' where the only criticism worth attending to comes from within the cosy company of the court.

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David Lindley

Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Volume I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985 by Martin Bernal. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987. Pp. xxxii + 575. \$15.00 (paper).

Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* is a vast and ambitious undertaking. In its final form it will consist of three volumes: the first as noted above; the second, *Greece European or Levantine? The Egyptian and West Semitic Components of Greek Civilization*; and the third, *Solving the Riddle of the Sphinx and Other Studies in Egypto-Greek Mythology*. In these volumes, Bernal, a scholar of Chinese and Vietnamese history and culture, attempts to rewrite the "origins" of Western culture, claiming that the standard view of the birth of Ancient Greek civilization that is taught today in the Academy is based upon nineteenth and early twentieth-century theories of cultural development that were shaped by racism, Romanticism, and nationalism.

Black Athena, which received favorable reviews in the popular press, has caused quite a stir in the field of Classics and its allied disciplines, archaeology and ancient history. The professional response has been, if I may rely upon what former Attorney General Edwin Meese has called "anecdotal evidence," generally negative, ranging from amused scorn to active irritation. Bernal has even been invited into the lion's den: at this year's joint meeting of the American Philological Association and the Archaeological Institute of America, a special panel has been devoted to "The Challenge of *Black Athena*: the Classicists' Response." What is the nature of this challenge, and why is it provoking such a swift institutional response?

To understand the impact of *Black Athena*, one must bear in mind the current state of the field of Classics, which is presently devoting much of its collective energy to the task of pulling itself into the mainstream of late twentieth century academic discourse. Essentially and historically a conservative discipline, Classics demands of its practitioners a daunting array of arcane skills: first and foremost, a rigorous training in two dead languages, and then a working knowledge of epigraphy, paleography, prosopography, textual criticism, metrics, classical archaeology. In short, it is a field in which

knowledge, or at least retention of data, is valued over analysis, and in which theory gets short shrift. But the field has in recent years been undergoing spasmodic bursts of self-examination. Unwilling to be relegated to the sidelines of academic debate, a growing number of classicists have turned their attention to critical theory. In recent years the liberal Classics journal *Arethusa* has produced issues devoted to Marxism, feminism, and semiotics; a recently released book of essays bears the title *Post-structuralist Classics* (ed. Andrew Benjamin [London and New York: Routledge, 1988]). The field, unquestionably, is changing.

And yet, despite the tumult, there is an almost formulaic quality to much of the current debate, as if the labelling of a theoretical approach enables one to dismiss its arguments without responding to them. It sometimes seems as though the attempt to keep up with more glamorous disciplines is not so much a challenge to the *status quo* of Classics as it is a collective enterprise—a scramble to return the field to its rightful position at the top of the academic hierarchy. It is into the midst of this confusion, at a time when classicists are deeply divided among themselves over the goals, the methodologies, the viability and the very nature of the field, that *Black Athena* has sprung, not quite fully formed but formidably armed, from the head of Martin Bernal.

One reason, perhaps, for the ire the book has provoked is its very unexpectedness. Bernal's approach is political and polemical, but he does not involve himself in the current theoretical debate that engages the minds of so many classicists. In many ways, his enterprise is curiously old-fashioned: he uses the techniques traditional to classicists to re-examine the same body of texts and archaeological evidence that classicists have always studied. He combines this wholesale re-examination of the available evidence with a history of classical scholarship, another enterprise that is traditional to classical studies. The book is unsettling because it uses traditional philological and linguistic tools to carve out radically different models of both the ancient world and the development of Classics as an academic field. It thus falls between two chairs, so to speak, outraging traditional philologists by its sweeping revision of ancient history, and at the same time failing to appeal to many of the new critical theorists because of its traditional methodology. It is conceivable that *Black Athena* will become notorious, yet fail to be influential, precisely because it provides the warring factions in the field with a common enemy—but we cannot judge the reaction until all three volumes have appeared in print.

Volume 1, the subject of this review, is mainly concerned with the development of and the conflict between what Bernal sees as the two major models of Greek history: the Aryan and the Ancient models, to use his terminology. The Ancient model, put together from the testimony of most Classical and Hellenistic Greek writers, proposes that Greek culture developed as the result of Phoenician and Egyptian colonization of mainland Greece in the middle of the second millennium BC; the Aryan model, which, according to Bernal, arose in the first half of the nineteenth century, posited an invasion of Indo-European speaking peoples from the north who overwhelmed the native population of Greece and stayed on to invent Greek civilization as we know it (or think we know it). The aim of *Black Athena* as a whole is both to

see which of these paradigms best fits the evidence available to us about the development of Greek culture and to examine the historical, political, and sociological reasons for the adoption of one model over the other at different points in European history.

Black Athena, as its title indicates, has a frankly political intent, and Bernal, true to his project, takes pains to make this clear to his readers. Summarizing his goals at the end of his lengthy introduction, he says, "the scholarly purpose [of the three volumes is] to open up new areas of research to women and men with far better qualifications than I have. The political purpose of *Black Athena* is, of course, to lessen European cultural arrogance" (p. 73). Bernal achieves both of these goals, but he will not escape the outrage of irate Hellenists and ancient historians, who will not appreciate his critique of traditional classical scholarship. Aware that he will be taken to task both for his ideas and for his status as an interloper in the field of Hellenic studies, Bernal comes out with his guns blazing. He opens *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece* with an aggressive attack upon the innate "intellectual passivity" that the authoritarian discipline of classical studies imposes on its students (p. 3), and argues that outsiders, or amateurs, are the best people to challenge the inherent intellectual limitations of the field. This is not an argument likely to endear him to the majority of classicists, but as he points out, the two most important discoveries in classical scholarship of the last two centuries were made by amateurs—the businessman Schliemann's discovery of Troy and Mycenae, and the architect Michael Ventris' translation of Linear B.

From this polemical beginning, Bernal sets out to analyze the historiography of Ancient Greece from the classical period to the present. He organizes this vast project by tracing the fate of the Ancient Model up to the eighteenth century, and then the rise of the competing Aryan model and its triumph in the mid-nineteenth century. His thesis is that the Ancient Model was overthrown not because of any internal inconsistencies or problems, but because of external social factors and intellectual paradigms, most notably the need to defend Christianity against the rise of radical Masonry and Hermeticism in the 18th century; the paradigm of historical progress (later is better, so the Greeks could not have learned anything significant from the earlier and therefore more primitive civilizations of the Egyptians and Phoenicians); racism arising from European policies of colonialism, extermination of native populations, and enslavement; and Romanticism.

The most fascinating—and chilling—sections of the book are entitled "Hellenomania 1" and "Hellenomania 2," which deal respectively with the establishment of *Philologie* or *Altertumswissenschaft* in Germany between 1790 and 1830, and the transmission of this 'new scholarship' to England in the mid-nineteenth century. Here Bernal shows how the "Science of Antiquity" became the pioneer modern discipline: "It was the first to establish clear-cut meritocratic networks of student-teacher relationships, Seminars or departments capable of manoeuvring to secure as large a portion of state funding as possible, and journals written in a professional jargon designed to maintain barriers between the practitioners of the discipline and the lay public" (p. 281). Yet the heart of this modern, scientific, and fact-based discipline pulsed to a wild and Romantic rhythm. The rational and objective *Altertumswissenschaft*, as Bernal shows with ample documentation, was important in

the education of the elite German youth precisely because educated Germans felt a mystical kinship with the Greeks, whose language was pure, authentic, and structurally similar to German, and who "were perceived as having transcended mundane chaos and being closer to the ineffable best. In some sense, then, they were themselves the human universal" (p. 288). In Britain, of course, the discipline of Classics, which Bernal characterizes as "conservative from the start" (p. 288), became the center of the public schools and the university system.

Bernal's extensive discussion of the roots of Classical scholarship and the lasting impact of Aryanism and Romanticism upon the discipline is the most valuable contribution of this fascinating but occasionally frustrating book. The introduction, which sets forth his model of the origins of Greek culture, and which outlines in detail the forthcoming second and third volumes, is highly provocative but difficult to evaluate, as it anticipates arguments based upon linguistic and archaeological evidence which he has yet to present. He asserts, for example, that up to 25% of the vocabulary of Ancient Greek is of Semitic origin, and that another 20-25% is Egyptian, a claim which most readers (including myself) will have no way of evaluating. His view that Greek culture was definitively shaped by Egyptian and Phoenician colonization of the mainland in the second millennium BC is a fascinating one that seems to agree with Ancient Greek historiography and myth, but again it is impossible to evaluate it until he has presented his linguistic and archaeological arguments in full. His discussion of the possibility of bilingual Egyptian-Greek punning on proper names in Aeschylus' *The Suppliants* seemed inherently plausible, and presumably he will present further arguments along these lines in volume 2. It seems likely, however, that classical archaeologists will remain unconvinced by such literary arguments and will counter them by pointing out that there is no clear evidence for widespread Egyptian and Phoenician presence on the Greek mainland. Perhaps to anticipate this objection from what he calls the "archaeological positivists," Bernal includes a critique of the "'argument from silence': the belief that if something has not been found, it could not have existed in significant quantities" (p. 9). It is true that it is virtually impossible to prove absence, but it is nevertheless dangerous to assume presence without concrete evidence.

Bernal's view of the ancient world is steadfastly original, and the text is strewn with startling ideas. He believes, for example, that the alphabet was introduced to the Greeks as early as the 17th century BC (the standard view is that it was sometime around the year 800); that Hesiod predated Homer; that Germanic Aryanism had a significant investment in the notion that Homer was an illiterate primitive bard; and that the Christian symbol of the fish was inspired by an awareness of an astrological change from the age of Aries to that of Pisces (similar to the one that will lead us into the age of Aquarius in a hundred years or so). The anxiety associated with this millennial event, Bernal suggests, was a factor in the relatively rapid collapse of Egyptian religion in the early Christian era. This is an intriguing suggestion, though it remains to be seen whether it can be proven.

Along with the benefits that come with a book that takes on so large a subject and so many periods of history there are, inevitably, some drawbacks. The argument is often sketchy at best, and occasionally difficult to follow,

and Bernal is sometimes unable to resist sensationalistic tactics. He has, for example, a chapter sub-heading called "The Murder of Hypatia" which consists of a mere two paragraphs, only one sentence of which mentions the murder of Hypatia. Similarly, Hegel and Marx are dragged in for a discussion of about three pages (p. 294-296), which hardly begins to do justice to their importance, and makes Bernal's argument at this point seem very hasty.

What of the present state of Classical scholarship? Bernal acknowledges at the beginning that he may be accused of attacking "straw men, or at least dead men" (p 9), since no scholar today would dare to claim racism as a theoretical base, and since, as he outlines in Chapter 10, the 'Extreme Aryan' model has been gradually abandoned by historians and Classicists since the end of the second World War. He shows convincingly, however, that the scholarly paradigms built upon such dubious bases tend to remain influential even after their theoretical underpinnings have been discredited. It is disappointing, then, that Bernal does not give a more comprehensive discussion of the development of twentieth-century scholarship. Despite his careful tracing of the links between nineteenth century racism and corresponding historical paradigms that 'proved' the inherent purity and superiority of Greek culture, Bernal devotes only a few pages to the ways in which classical scholarship reacted to the rise of fascism in Europe before World War 2, a topic which would seem to be the logical culminating point of his argument.

He does return at the end of the book to the post-war situation, but his description focusses on a few individuals (Cyrus Gordon, Michael Astour, and Ruth Edwards, among others), and on the competing claims of the champions of the Phoenicians and the champions of the Egyptians. This decision enables him to make some interesting forays into the politics of historical scholarship. He suggests, for example, that the general discrediting of anti-Semitism in intellectual circles after the war resulted in the substitution of linguistic divisions between cultures for ones based on race, and gave a new significance to arguments for the purity of the Greek language. Thus, he says, "it is not surprising that while there has been considerable relaxation of the ban on Near Eastern influence in the area of material culture, and some movement on mythology, when it comes to language the prohibition on fundamental Afroasiatic influences is still rigidly maintained" (pp. 413-414). At the same time, he believes that the assimilation of Jewish intellectuals into the academic mainstream and the emergence of the state of Israel as a powerful player in Middle Eastern politics has created an increased respect for and interest in Semitic studies that are gradually breaking down what he calls the Extreme Aryan Model.

He also, in one of the more controversial sections of the book, discusses how disenfranchised black intellectuals embraced the paradigm of a black African Egypt as the plundered cradle of culture and claimed Egypt as the origin of Western culture. Bernal's serious consideration of this non-academic, clearly polemical literature will undoubtedly annoy professional scholars, and he speaks of the ambivalent feelings it produced in him: "on the one hand, my training made me recoil at the lack of so many of the outward trappings of scholarship; on the other, I found that my intellectual position was far closer to the black literature than it was to orthodox ancient history" (pp. 401-402). Though he treats this material respectfully, he does not accept it

uncritically. He objects to the general hostility of the black scholars he cites to Semitic culture, and one of his goals in *Black Athena* is to set forth a model that will reconcile the pro-Egyptian theories of black scholars with the increasingly pro-Semitic, and therefore pro-Phoenician, theories of white scholars.

By choosing these two camps as the focus of his discussion, however, he leaves us with an incomplete and, I believe, somewhat misleading view of present-day scholarship—despite the conservatism of the fields, Classics and Ancient History have slowly begun to expand beyond the positivist approaches of archaeology and philology, and there is, as I have mentioned above, a rapidly growing split between traditionalists and scholars attempting to find a more broadly-based, interdisciplinary approach to the study of antiquity. The skirmishes Bernal details in the final chapters of this volume take place within the larger framework of a debate within the institution which Bernal, concentrating upon the competing claims of pro-Egyptians and pro-Phoenicians, does not discuss.

It is a pity that Bernal does not analyze the present state of the field of Classics in more depth, for such a discussion might well strengthen his argument. To take but one example, I wish Bernal had chosen to look at the impact of structuralism and post-structuralism on recent scholarship in his discussion of the dating of Greek acquisition of the alphabet. The question of the impact of writing and of control over the technology of textual production upon the development of Greek literature has become central to studies of archaic Greek literature. It would be fascinating to see whether this infusion of modern critical theory has been used to bolster or to challenge traditional scholarly paradigms of Greek cultural development. Though Bernal does not address these issues himself, his remarkable book challenges us to consider whether these new theoretical approaches are opening up the field of Classics, or whether the discipline's innate conservatism is instead warping them to fit its own hidden agenda—the maintenance of the *status quo* and the preservation of the academic hierarchy.

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Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England, edited by Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. Pp. viii + 364. \$10.35 (paper).

Sharpe and Zwicker: "Words may be constant while their meanings undergo change."

Undergraduate: "Everytime a word is used it changes its meaning."

Distinguished English language expert to undergraduate: "If I said to you 'Balls,' and then I said to you 'Balls, Balls, Balls,' would the words change their meanings?"

The rather straightforward statements adopted in the Introduction to this sometimes excellent, often stimulating and certainly necessary collection of essays, is an indication of the need for fundamental common ground when literary critics and historians attempt to bridge the gap between the habitual concerns of their two disciplines. The question is, of what should this shared language consist? Will it ever be truly common, or will it always be a dialogue of mutual suspicion between two parties, where every meeting point is matched by vast tracts of mutual miscomprehension?

Reading through this dense volume, one is often uneasily struck by the oscillation between observations concerning language and society which seem very basic, and more elevated insights, sometimes plainly stated, at other times put so obscurely that one wonders whether the author in question is in control of her or his theoretical vocabulary or whether there is stylistic awkwardness. In this collection, there is something very odd—not just the collision of literature and history, or the undulating effect of different contributions contiguously arranged. The engine is not quite in tune: the disharmony is the sound of people trying to voice the hitherto unspoken. No one could predict the shape of a new critical language, and it is from the unforeseen effects of this collection that we have most to learn.

In 1985, Dollimore and Sinfield published *Political Shakespeare*, the essays in which sought to reveal the historical conditions working in Shakespeare's plays, as texts and performances, then and now. *Politics of Discourse* represents a significant advance for the degree to which the contributors are generally more aware of the problems in their methods, and their inherent limitations, than were their predecessors. On the other hand, despite its shortcomings, *Political Shakespeare* was exciting, and politically engaged; some parts of Sharpe and Zwicker sent me to sleep. As the editors admit, they have assembled a collection which is mostly concerned with a high culture of largely male writings and with "politics" in the most orthodox sense of the word. Indeed, several essays attempt to trace a process of change in the century: the familiar theme of secularization and the rise of nationalism as a key concept and guarantor of authority in public discourse both make appearances. This tends to have a limiting influence on the kinds of subject-matter being considered: there is little space for religion, for the irrational, for the private side of sexuality, and for many of the concerns which currently exercise social historians. To say that poetry is where the most "innovative work" is being done is blatantly untrue: it is simply a statement of where the editors have chosen to place their emphasis.

Of the eleven contributions here, eight are the work of literary critics (seven American, one British) and three the work of historians (two British and one hybrid New Zealander teaching in America). Perhaps there should have been some more American historians, and some more British literary critics. The volume is decidedly masculinist: on the one hand, most of the material presented by the three female contributors is concerned with matters of relatively small focus; on the other, three of the men offer discussions with a vast range and a Platonic, neo-transcendental unity which is not only questionable (I do not think that the notion of "cultural authority" has been clearly or convincingly explained here), but which also lacks the perspective a feminist viewpoint might bring to the issues. Yet it is surely in feminist crit-

icism about this period that some of the most "innovative work" is being done.

By far the best contribution is David Norbrook's seemingly exhaustive search for the political aetiology of *Macbeth*. Here, Shakespeare is shown to underplay a long tradition of elective, popular kingship theory in Scottish tradition, inherited and extended in different terms by the humanist Reformer George Buchanan, who was also James VI's and I's tutor. Norbrook's enormous and adroit elaboration of Scottish historiography—original in its own right—is coupled with suggestive hints for future work, like Buchanan's association of resistance-to-tyrants theory with the proto-feminist drama of Euripides. A new set of readings for Shakespeare's tragedy is provided but the reader is also left with plenty more to tease out of Shakespeare's text in the light of this newly elaborated context. The daringness of Norbrook's reading rescues a dimension of Macbeth's "nobility:" he is a regicide, not just an inwardly-torn hero in the usually-accepted sense. Shakespeare was nonetheless able to exaggerate what James had himself taken from Buchanan: an abhorrence of unnatural interruptions to the order of the state—represented most obviously in the image of female power. We are given a timely reminder that, while patriarchal authority was being enhanced in the development of ideas of divine right kingship, Renaissance thought was not monolithic and uni-directional: "Shakespeare may have come under pressure from his royal patron to substitute a mystical and legitimist version of Scottish history for the rationalist and constitutional viewpoint of the old tutor who haunted his nightmares, but it is impossible to exorcise a ghost without first summoning forth its presence" (pp. 115-6). Overall, this article is as convincing as neo-Foucauldian, New Historicist considerations of James's monolithic, unchallengeable power, are not.

Norbrook's method is addressed by Pocock, in his (as one might expect) rich but clear *credo*: the development of the language of politics as successive cultures and situations caused meanings to change through time. This exposition, with its roots in speech-act theory, and the relationship between text and performance (texts are language performances and their reading makes history), is one of the most succinct statements of Pocock's very fruitful method. But as soon as the method attempts to grapple with that which is beyond the rational universe of legal, historical and political discourse, such as the world of inner demons, Pocock's ideas become less appropriate. And Norbrook's argument is also shackled to a rationalist bias. Even Renaissance republicanism had a shadowy psychic dimension.

This is demonstrated in Blair Worden's painstaking, intuitive consideration of the reasons for Marvell's *volte face* in 1650, and his remarkably subtle appreciation of the complicated politics of the English republic. Worden's ability to make convincing probable conjectures where no obvious evidence exists has already made possible the rediscovery of seventeenth-century republicanism. Now we see the *Horatian Ode* as a clever hatching together of the phraseology of contemporary journalism, and where Marvell falls in behind the infant republic because it offers the best hope for peace. The poem emerges as more convincingly republican, Machiavellian and less Royalist than ever before.

But there are drawbacks with Worden's style. Despite his characteristic *brio*, he does not need to write (almost in an embarrassed way) according to his *idea* of what literary criticism should sound like: "The volume of elegies to Hastings had been called *Lachrymae Musarum*. Now Marvell has dried and cleared his eyes" (p. 179). There seems a vast credibility gap—albeit forgivable because of the nature of professional difference—between his literary criticism and his historical writing. In a not-unrelated way, Kevin Sharpe performs a careful contents analysis of Thomas Carew's lyrics, so careful in its attention to the qualities of love which regulate Carew's poetic vision of society, that it is difficult to believe that such a positive ethics could exist without compromise in the Caroline court. More of a sense of the circulation of such poetry in the Caroline court, a realistic account of why courtiers wrote poetry, and further attention to the internal machinations of Neoplatonic theory, would have helped. As it is, reading this essay is like being asked to believe that Oliver North is a pacifist.

While few of the literary critics writing here would like to be seen denying the historical dimension, the most disquieting aspect of their contribution is the emasculation of the social. The "politics of discourse" yes, but not at the expense of the *polis* itself. All too often in this volume, the political becomes exclusively a discursive effect, or worse still, the agent of political or social change. Michael McKeon wants to see some overall pattern in which, since religion becomes an unusable and unsafe category in later-seventeenth-century public language, the discourse of that which may be considered spiritual came to be located in the aesthetic. Casting aside the use of the Genesis myth as a valid mode of political conceptualisation and debate (as the experience of the 1640s demonstrated, such a way was too bloody), men became more impressed by their own achievements in state fashioning, and aesthetic discourse offered an available means for such considerations. Valuable as this conclusion is, the interpretation assumes that historical change may be measured, explained even, by discursive displacement. That persecution and toleration should be connected only with powers of definition, and that religion began to pay lip service to political settlements (the Clarendon Code), rather than vice-versa, excludes entirely the relationship between belief and action, or experience. Where are the individuals for whom questions of faith and liberty of conscience really mattered, and where is the operation of persecution itself (terror, imprisonment, press-breaking, house-burning)? For McKeon to say that religion is in "crisis" because of its problematic definition is merely to restate a situation which had been growing since the Reformation. The cart is being put before the horse, whereas both constitute an inseparable unity and process. Like his work on the origins of the novel, his article here is very clever, but the contorted, impacted sentences bespeak over-determination. Developments in the argument are wrenched out of secondary material, and other statements resist verification: "Because the naive empiricist claim to historicity subserves here the explicit end of teaching the Christian truths of the spirit, in the apparition narratives of the Restoration period the politics of discourses discloses itself with the unarticulated energy of raw contradiction" (p. 47). Modern assumptions (for instance, that secularization is bound up with the "materialization" or "concretion" of narratives, and hence the novel) are marshalled to achieve an explanation which is, in the

end, very traditional and expected, despite the ingenuity of the execution. It seems to me that McKeon is re-building old orthodoxies, within modern theoretical paradigms, rather than using a wide field of evidence that exists to explore the otherness of the past. As things stand, a form of Whiggery has re-emerged. It might be more important, for instance, to look for surviving unconcretised allegories: the English followers of Jacob Boehme were busy producing these in an unpersecuted world of gentile piety. Or again, what does McKeon really mean when he talks about "spirit"? It might be argued that what was radical speculation concerning the relationship between spirit and matter in the central decades of the century became, after 1660, an impulse in a developing Dissenting poetics. The significance of definition in radical religious writing resides in the uncertainty which sectarians had in delimiting the spheres of the angelic and the carnal. To say that Fifth Monarchists had a remarkably materialistic idea of what the millennium would be like is a half-truth, the argument in which McKeon cites them a distortion.

Similar charges could be made against Stephen Zwicker's compressed attempt to show how forms of "cultural authority" manifested themselves throughout the century. Zwicker continually insists that the political determines the literary in the Restoration, rather than accepting the interpenetration of the two, and developing readings from that assumption. Nonetheless, the piece remains suggestive: Zwicker's notion of an "opposition poetics" is certainly worthy of future consideration, and should be connected with Richard Ashcraft's recent depiction of Locke's milieu. Other contributions prefer to reside in the realm of implication. Earl Miner plays with the notions of "history" and "storia" as they occur in Milton's text, so that we see *Paradise Lost* making simultaneously the most literal and the most extraordinary, supra-Mosaic truth claims. Miner meanders his way through Milton's writings to reach an elegant if unsurprising conclusion, but one which will surely be altered if Milton's theological context, as well as his sense of literary tradition, is taken into account. Annabel Patterson's characteristically subtle and indirect consideration of the political uses of fables at different points in the seventeenth century, is the most successful, alongside Norbrook, in achieving an enlightenment in method and *praxis* as well as a clarification of subject-matter. Fables are protean, permitting different readings from different positions, according to the parameters afforded by their simple, oblique authority structures. Aesopian fables continually remind rulers of the vocal power of underdogs; political reading for Patterson becomes just such an endless process of the detection of subject positions, an endless tale of fabular deployment itself.

With the profusion of so many different types of analysis, one is bound to say that the theoretical framework presented in the volume is inadequate as a means for readers to assess the interpretations on offer. This is not so much a fault as a discovery which the volume itself makes. For a long time, the only really powerful recent theory of interpretation available to intellectual historians was that of the Skinner and Pocock school. The juxtapositions in this collection make even that approach seem vulnerable, or at least in need of up-dating. The politics of discourses will remain unconvincing as long as there remains mutual shyness between the worlds of action and of discourse.

In their individual ways, the essays in *Politics of Discourse* show the need for a grand theory of literature and history.

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Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature by Lee Patterson. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. Pp. xiv + 239. \$35.00, cloth; \$15.95, paper.

Patterson's long-awaited book focuses on questions about "the historical understanding of literature" and so deserves a wider audience than the medievalists to whom it is primarily addressed. The enormous range of topics that Patterson covers is truly admirable. The book is divided into three sections. The first ("Historicism and Its Discontents") contains chapters entitled "Historical Criticism and the Development of Chaucer Studies" and "Historical Criticism and the Claims of Humanism." The second section ("Inventing Originality") has chapters on "The Logic of Textual Criticism and the Way of Genius: The Kane-Donaldson *Piers Plowman* in Historical Perspective" and "Ambiguity and Interpretation: A Fifteenth-Century Reading of *Troilus and Criseyde*." The final section ("Medieval Historicism") has chapters entitled "Virgil and the Historical Consciousness of the Twelfth Century: The *Roman d'Eneas* and *Eric at Enide*" and "The Romance of History and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*."

Chapter 1 surveys Chaucer scholarship since the later eighteenth century, revealing the historicity of the critical and institutional framework within which we work. He argues persuasively that the conflict between New Critical and exegetical approaches to Chaucer is rooted in opposing views of the Middle Ages dating back to the Gothic Revival. From the start, the historicist project, according to Patterson, contained "a largely hidden debate between a conditioning historical context and a transhistorical humanism" (p. 14), a debate that continues to this day. Exegetical criticism represents a conservative attack on the "liberal humanist ideology" that has dominated Anglo-American literary studies from the beginning. While Patterson sees the chief value in exegetical criticism to consist in the fierceness of its attack on the transhistorical humanism of New Criticism, at the same time he believes that the weakness of exegetical criticism stems from its "unwitting compromises to both its historicism and its antihumanism" (p. 26). Unlike most earlier guides to the debate on exegetical criticism, Patterson is keenly aware of the ideological significance of even so socially marginal an activity as medieval studies.

The second chapter is of special interest for its examination of the historical (and therefore ideological) matrices of humanism as it developed in the period of emergent industrial capitalism and the rise of modern nationalisms. Although medievalists as a group have, until recently, avoided getting much involved in political and theoretical controversies, Patterson issues a direct challenge to medievalists by admitting from the start that he agrees with Fredric Jameson's insistence "on the priority of the political in governing our

interpretive activities" (p. x). This is a conclusion that he admits to having long resisted, and one that many of his readers probably will continue to resist.

What, then, is the Patterson's own position? He makes it clear that he wishes to produce a socially responsible scholarship that lies unmistakably left of center, and he underscores his commitment to the humanist or "liberal assertion of the freedom of the individual from a determining historical context" (p. 25). As he explains in his preface, now that the old-style historicism is no longer an option for many of us, and formalism has been discredited for some time, a third way must be "negotiated" (to use his favorite metaphor) if we are to explore the relation between texts and contexts. Following the lead of such cultural anthropologists as Clifford Geertz and Marshall Sahlins, Patterson is interested in an approach that is "symbolic" rather than "dialectical" (p. xi).

Patterson faults the New Historicism for being far more politically conservative in practice than its proponents seem to believe. He attributes this conservatism to the New Historicist adoption of Foucault's vision of discursive and non-discursive institutions that are simply too powerful to escape. While the New Historicist appropriation of one influential reading of Foucault's notion of power/knowledge may well lead to a choice between despair or a politically quiescent acceptance of the way things are, it nonetheless remains open to disagreement whether Foucault himself is to blame for this pessimistic view of social reality.

Patterson's dismissal of Marxism earlier in the chapter is based on equating Marxism with its Hegelian branch, which he criticizes for its "totalizing" nature and which he sees as unacceptably reductive at best and totalitarian in its effects at worst. This is a common enough argument. But is not this effort to exert mastery over almost 150 years of intellectual development and political practice itself a form of totalization? Besides, if the spectre of Marxism is so easily laid to rest, why does the task need repeating so often? Contemporary Marxism is far more heterogeneous than Patterson lets on. Indeed, it is the very ability of Marxism to absorb the criticism of its opponents that insures that we cannot put it behind us in about ten pages, as Patterson attempts to do. My point is not that Patterson should have surveyed the varieties of contemporary Marxism and other forms of radical discourse in a book devoted to medieval studies. Instead, it is simply that Patterson might have been clearer about the nature of his exclusions. Feminism is especially conspicuous for its absence from his discussion of humanism and its discontents, given the last twenty years or so of feminist criticism that has repeatedly shown us the gender bias of liberal humanist ideology.

Chapter 3 is a brilliant reading of the Kane-Donaldson edition of the B version of *Piers Plowman* and the assumptions on which it is based. Even those who are not Middle English specialists should find the essay of value since it addresses the broad issue of a search for a useable past. As Patterson shows, editing is always an interpretive activity. He provides a brief but learned survey of the development of the canons of textual criticism since the eighteenth century to show that Kane and Donaldson are "heirs to the complex tradition to which Lachmann is a prime witness" (p. 108). Lachmann, as Peter Ganz points out, "was not interested in the problems of textual criticism for their

own sake: his aim was always to make great poetry of the past accessible to his contemporaries" (quoted p. 108). Indeed, what editor is not primarily interested in making the past "accessible"? To accomplish this cultural task, Lachmann's job was to establish a "stable" text that can be made present to a reader across the historical divide. Yet the textual apparatus of such an act of recovery indicates that the text has been *produced* by editorial procedures and is thus mediated rather than immediate. It is this "mixed inheritance" that Patterson points to in his discussion of Kane-Donaldson. He concludes the essay by asking if we are prepared to give up all attempts to establish texts. Indeed, despite their "misplaced resistance to codifying their procedures into a generally applicable system" (p. 79), the editors of *Piers Plowman*, as Patterson suggests, have a rational theory based on an interpretation of the empirical evidence. Their theory thus deserves credit until a better one replaces it. The alternative, as Patterson suggests, would be to abnegate editorial responsibility altogether in "an arbitrarily foreclosed act of historical understanding" (p. 113). Indeed, the same point ought to be applied more generally to *all* forms of historical research.

The next chapter is a fascinating case study that convincingly reconstructs one fifteenth-century reader's understanding of Chaucer's *Troilus*. The essay is thus of special interest since, like the exegetical critics, Patterson aims at recovering a medieval understanding of literary meaning and yet, unlike the exegetes, he does not present his reconstruction as *the* authentically medieval meaning of the work. Patterson makes brilliant use of a fifteenth-century religious treatise in which there is an explicit reference to Chaucer's poem. The fifteenth-century compiler of *Disce mori* takes a humane approach. Rather than reading the poem allegorically, this fifteenth-century reader reads it literally, as a cautionary tale, while respecting "the psychological reality of the characters" (p. 147). The author of *Disce mori* is thus conveniently anti-Robertsonian for Patterson's purposes.

The final section of the book concentrates on examples of "medieval historicism," or attempts by vernacular romances to recuperate a useable past. Chapter 5 is on the readings of Vergil's *Aeneid* implied by the *Roman d'Eneas* and *Erec et Enide*. The *Eneas* in part subverts the disruptions of historical linearity present in the original version of the story. The unproblematic presentation of lineage in the *Eneas*, as Patterson suggests, served the interests of the Norman and Anglo-Norman ruling class whose privilege depended on primogeniture. But the poem is not entirely a simplification of the *Aeneid*: like Vergil, the twelfth-century poet does demonstrate "a counterawareness . . . of the human cost of the historical life" (p. 181). This awareness points to "an authentic Virgilianism." Though Patterson never invokes the formulation, he evidently has in mind Vergil's famous *lacrimae rerum* ("there are tears to things"). Perhaps we should be a little wary of this traditional view of the Augustan propagandist.

In Chrétien de Troyes' romance, *Enide* "functions as the agent who releases Eric from his imprisonment within a masculinist ideology of erotic possessiveness and martial self-sufficiency" (p. 189). Chrétien implicitly criticizes the legitimizing ideology of the *Eneas* by creating "an alliance of the culturally marginal" when he has the dwarf Givret provide *Enide* with a palfrey in a passage that alludes to the figure of Camilla, Vergil's Amazon.

Despite this one conciliatory gesture towards "the victims of the imperialist project," some readers may feel that the final section of the book offers little more than "readings as usual" of canonical works, with "historicism" serving more as a literary theme than a scholarly program. The one weakness of the book (and of many other collections of essays originally written for different occasions) is a disunity that is somewhat disappointing given the lively political debate of the opening chapters. Many politically committed scholars will welcome Patterson's lament on the dreary social and political scene of America in the late nineteen-eighties (see p. 71). Until now, few medievalists have thought it their business to point out that "if indeed Foucault's dystopic vision of the carceral society is on the way to fulfillment, then surely our scholarly task should be to stand against it" (p. 71).

Yet if the pervading sense of carceral "containment" is what diminishes the potential of the New Historicism to serve as an oppositional criticism (as Patterson argues), it nonetheless seems the case that he himself remains vulnerable in the later chapters to exactly the same charge he levels at the neo-foucauldians: "Indeed, perhaps the lesson that the unintended conservatism of New Historicism teaches us is that if you do not have an explicit politics—an ideology—then one will certainly have you" (p. 70). But Patterson never tells us exactly in what he thinks the "political" consists. He does, however, believe in the necessity of subscribing to humanism, since "[t]o deprive the human agent of any purchase upon the social whole is to signal the end of a politics we desperately need" (p. 72). I doubt, however, that we need to rescue either humanism or individualism to admit of human agency in socially progressive struggles (see Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject*). But given Patterson's obvious commitment to infusing a progressive politics into our scholarship, the closing essay may leave readers perplexed.

The anonymous fourteenth-century poet of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, according to Patterson, "records the nature of action in a world that no longer believes in history" (p. 227). The "almost nihilistic finality" (p. 229) of the poem's conclusion had been figured earlier in the poem by Arthur's dream of Fortune's wheel. Such a vision, Patterson argues, "represents historical recurrence" (p. 224). This bleak sense of meaningless repetition, as Patterson reminds us, was precisely the nightmare from which Augustinian transcendentalism was meant to awaken us. But Patterson, in opposition to the exegetes, chooses humanism over Augustinianism. He therefore concludes his discussion of this medieval tragedy—and thus the book itself—by citing Shakespeare's famous lines from *Richard II*, when the deposed ruler pathetically asks us to join him on the ground to "tell sad stories of the death of kings." Patterson tells us that Richard "correctly assumes that the relationship between monarchy and tragedy is reciprocal" (p. 229)—as though we can afford to trust the king who is speaking!

Patterson leaves us with a sense of the tremendous burden that power imposes on those who are so unfortunate as to wield it. Such moments of "royal apologetics" as we find in the poem "aim not at elevation but at sympathy: it is less the king whom we are to admire than the man who must be king whom we are to pity" (p. 230). This uncritical generosity towards those who exercise power appears to embrace the very ideologies upon which royal authority in part depended. The reader may very well wonder whether

we are not also being invited here to accept modern-day apologies for existing relations of power. After all, it must be a terrible burden to be chairman of the board at Chrysler when it comes time to close another factory. If sympathy for the human situation of those who oppress us is what is entailed by Patterson's recuperation of humanism, then evidently there is still work to be done. Some readers might be reminded that, as Foucault once remarked, "in political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king."

Pattersonian historicism, as it appears in his preface, "issues from and entails discontent" (p. x), since all historicism must endlessly "negotiate" its way between an irreconcilable opposition between "the otherness of a distant past" and one's "own historical situation" (p. ix). Yet professional historians reconcile this opposition in their daily practice without much evidence of discontent. It is perhaps regrettable that a book about "the historical understanding of medieval literature" should virtually ignore what historians say about the Middle Ages. If we focus on *historicism* rather than on historical *process*, we should not be too surprised when the same spectre of recurrence and repetition that once haunted King Arthur threatens to inhabit our projects as well.

By insisting on the political nature of our work in medieval studies, Lee Patterson has provided us a service long overdue, even if his collection of essays reveals ideological contradictions. But given his formidable powers as a critic, we have every reason to look forward to his forthcoming book on Chaucer.

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