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Strange Power of Speech: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Literary Possession by Susan Eilenberg. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Pp. 28 + xvii. \$35.00.

William Wordsworth: Intensity and Achievement by Thomas McFarland. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. Pp. 176 + vi. \$45.00.

The questions with which Susan Eilenberg begins *Strange Power of Speech*—"Who owns language? or, Who controls meaning?" (ix)—have been addressed in sometimes startlingly literal terms in the criticism of the past decade or so. The work of the New Historicists, positing what Eilenberg calls "an economic constitution of meaning" (xiv), has suggested that poetic language achieves its effects through the denial or repression of its material origins, which return in the reified form of transcendental consciousness. The various and often extreme receptions accorded to this thesis have, in turn, revealed its proximity to the issues of cultural value and institutional transmission raised by the canon debate. Challenging the belief in literature's exemption from economic determinations, the New Historicism has also posed challenges to the nature and value of the literary canon, that accumulation of "cultural capital" whose ownership and control have recently been so contested.

Neither Eilenberg nor Thomas McFarland belongs in the lists of the New Historicists; indeed, both are, for differing reasons and with unequal subtlety, critical of its central premises. Both, moreover, have devoted their new books to that most traditional of high-canonical subjects, the "first generation" of Romantic poets. Yet each of these critics, returning to territory lately colonized by the materialists, not only confronts their language and assumptions but attempts to reconceive their characteristic *modus operandi*. Eilenberg addresses tropes of "propriety, property and possession" (ix)—materialist concerns *par excellence*—in the writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge, while the first chapter of *William Wordsworth: Intensity and Achievement* consists of an attack on Marjorie Levinson's influential reading of "Tintern Abbey." The contrasting results suggest that McFarland's book may be read as symptomatic of a proprietorial anxiety thematized by the younger scholar.

Strange Power of Speech studies what has variously been termed the collaboration, symbiosis, or dialogue of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The issue has been treated many times before, by McFarland among others, and more recently by Lucy Newlyn, Paul Magnuson, and Gene Ruoff. Among the most impressive qualities of this book, indeed, is the fearlessness with which Eilenberg tackles a familiar topic. Her study is divided into two parts: the first and longer devoted to readings of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the second concerned with the *Biographia Literaria* and Wordsworth's late writings on copyright reform. While only the final chapter breaks really new critical ground, Eilenberg, an elegantly subtle close reader, offers fresh insights on every text she examines. Her prose is sophisticated without ever sacrificing lucidity, and graced often with flourishes of wit. Her analyses are carefully articulated and compelling, especially when she brings novel literary-historical and cultural contexts to bear on her central texts.

Eilenberg's first chapter establishes the terms of her argument through a reflection on the title page of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. In the transition from

the anonymity of the first edition to the *single* authorship of the second edition, Eilenberg sees an allegory of poetic "propriety," the principle invoked by Wordsworth to describe both his own style and his excision of Coleridge's poem "Christabel." Propriety, as Eilenberg demonstrates with reference to classical rhetorical theory, "imply[es] a certain relation to place and property" (13); as a poetic principle, it denotes a loyalty to the communal and the matter-of-fact but also, paradoxically, suggests an appropriative relation to language. The notion of propriety, then, leads simultaneously towards problems of labor and economics (who will own these joint textual experiments?); towards issues of poetic voice and manner; towards questions of materiality (the opacity of language, the "thingness" of the external world); and towards the psychological phenomena associated with the "uncanny" (as, with neat dialectical logic, "property" slides into "possession"). For Wordsworth, Eilenberg argues, propriety was intimately bound up with the reality of real estate; for Coleridge, propriety was a defense against the linguistic threat to consciousness figured by the demonic.

The four following chapters elaborate these connections in readings of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (Chapter 2), Wordsworth's "Poems on the Naming of Places" (Chapter 3), Wordsworth's "Michael" and Coleridge's "Christabel" (Chapter 4), and the "Lucy" poems (Chapter 5). The "Rime" is for Eilenberg the "most deeply and characteristically Coleridgean" of poems because it "denies its origins. . . . It gives us imitations, repetitions, representations—but no originals" (58–59). The "Poems on the Naming of Places" are commensurately Wordsworthian, their very banality a revelation of poetry that "invests an unpromising object or form with as much significance as it can bear while providing as little story or explanation as is possible" (66). The acts of nomination they record, moreover, reflect "the naming that occurs on the title page . . . the appropriation of these pieces of ground stands for the appropriation of a literary territory" (85). Wordsworth's substitution of "Michael" for "Christabel" suggests a struggle between rival poetics, with "Christabel" the inevitable loser; Eilenberg argues, however, that the repressed melodrama returns in the form of "material alien to [Wordsworth's] design" (97), while the principle of "sympathy" celebrated in "Michael" involves "a conceptual pun on 'Christabel's 'possession'" (106). In the "Lucy" poems, Coleridge's influence makes itself differently felt; their "power . . . to subject the poet to the conditions of his own texts" links them with his "uncanniest" poems, even though they "carry to its logical conclusion the program Wordsworth avowed in the Preface" (109).

The second section of *Strange Power of Speech* expands upon and theorizes the readings provided in the first section. Two chapters on the *Biographia Literaria* discuss Coleridge's proprietary concern with "bring[ing] into connection ideas with no common basis and provid[ing] a ground for the meaningful distinction of differences" (172). Chapter 6, "The Heterogeneity of the *Biographia Literaria*," is distinguished by a brilliant reading of Coleridge's plagiarisms as "transcendental idealism in action" (154), symptoms of the problem that both Coleridge and his "original," Schelling, undertook to solve. "For Schelling," Eilenberg concludes,

the figure of the other behaves like a piece of repressed knowledge; the problem he banished from the larger world (that of the unknowable thing in itself, the absolute other) and tried to refigure as alienated and forgotten self uncannily reappears as a problem of the internal structure of the self. Coleridge omits to mention that self-knowledge has unconsciousness at its core, that knowledge of the self can never, by its very nature, be complete. This forms part of the repressed knowledge of his autobiography, although Coleridge himself must have been aware of it. . . . Although the printed words let slip few hints that self-knowledge is not the property of the self, the form and the history of the text enact the message. (161)

If Eilenberg's mention of "property" seems an afterthought here, it nevertheless provides a frame for the splendid final chapter in which she demonstrates how Wordsworth's poetics of materiality led to a concern with literary property. This is the most elaborately contextualized chapter of the book, and represents a subtle departure from the more strictly "allegorical" first section. While the chapters on *Lyrical Ballads* seem limited, at times, by a kind of deconstructive orthodoxy (Chapter 5, for instance, is much indebted to Frances Ferguson's chapter on the "Lucy" poems in *Language as Counter-spirit*), this last chapter attempts to account for the way literary figures "realize their own economic implications" (192). Copyright, Eilenberg muses, "insists upon the substance promised by the words. . . . It legislates the translation of the verbal into the material" (211). Such a conclusion deepens and complicates her initial statement that "for the purposes of this study, tropes, even economic ones, are only tropes and matter by virtue of their tropical interplay" (xiv). Intended as a refutation of the New Historicist emphasis on ideology, that disclaimer begs a number of questions in the process of distancing the argument from one oversimplification. One need not, for example, embrace a pure version of economic causality to investigate how landed property constitutes a signifying practice. Indeed, given Eilenberg's careful gloss on rhetorical "propriety," it is rather surprising never to find comparable discussions of her other key terms, property and possession. Blackstone's derivation of "the right which an author may be supposed to have in his own original literary composition" from the principle of "occupancy" (Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* [Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1908], 2:405) is suggestive in relation to the "Poems on the Naming of Places," while a historical perspective might qualify the assertion that literary property is "unlike any other kind of property" in that it "embodied an aspect of essential character; a function of individual identity, it was inalienable" (204). By immediately reducing economics to "a system regulating the commensurability of the incommensurable" (xiv), Eilenberg perhaps loses an opportunity to develop her argument on the way figuration is literalized in economic truth.

Though Thomas McFarland's new book never explicitly broaches the issue of property, its subtext is a licensing dispute over the interpretation of "great poets." *William Wordsworth: Intensity and Achievement* begins, in a style Eilenberg might appreciate, with a self-citation: "In a recent book of mine called *Shapes of Culture*, it is argued that the forms of culture have been, or are in the process of being, overwhelmed by repetition and exponentially increasing

commentary" (1). McFarland apparently sees no irony in opening an attack on academic publication with this reference to his own work of criticism; indeed, he notes in the Preface that he has "throughout the volume attempted to refer discussion to . . . aspects of my other published work . . . with the aim of fitting the book into a context established by a coherence of effort over a period of years" (vi). This remark, however, somewhat understates the actual case; in the course of 164 pages, McFarland not only recapitulates earlier positions but quotes himself repeatedly and at length.

These quotations—a way of establishing prior occupancy—form part of a coherent, though only partially articulated, strategy for displacing the "cultural mushrooms" (32) that, McFarland believes, have recently grown up in the sacrosanct territory of literary studies. Those "arbitrary shapes" include the work of deconstructors like Eilenberg as well as essays in cultural materialism. But that McFarland's immediate target should be Marjorie Levinson seems more than accidental; her reading of "Tintern Abbey," with its focus on the impoverished population of the Wye Valley, may conjure a vision of squatters' rights in the poetic tradition. McFarland retaliates with an effort to "[re]draw the line" (28) of critical "decorum," thereby establishing what counts as significant commentary and what does not. Arguing that Levinson's category of historical "repression" arrogates too much power to the interpreter, McFarland concludes that this freedom is illusory: since she "really has no right to exclude anything" (29), she "forfeit[s] all authority as a critic" (31). She is, in fact, no more than an upstart, one of those "hungry generations of young scholars" who "rush on to the scene eager to make their own marks, only to find that what really needs to be done has already been done" (23–24). Her revisionist reading, invalidated by the professional circumstances that gave it birth, "do[es] not affect my possession of the poem" (28).

That assertion notwithstanding, any attempt to discredit one mode of interpretation will stand or fall on its scholarly rigor as well as the interest generated by its own hermeneutic. *Intensity and Achievement* falls short in both these categories. McFarland's characteristic response to the "inundation of contemporary understanding by previous understanding and commentary" (23) is simply to ignore most recent scholarship. For example, although Levinson's essay on "Tintern Abbey" has been the subject of several critiques, including a well-known article by M. H. Abrams and a review essay by Mark Edmundson, McFarland nowhere comments on the parallels between his objections and those that have appeared elsewhere. Similarly, in his final chapter McFarland notes the existence of an issue of *Studies in Romanticism* devoted to *The Borderers*, but the extended reading that follows shows no awareness of the excellent work this play has recently attracted.

McFarland's main contribution to understanding "the special nature of Wordsworth's greatness as a poet" revolves around the notion of "intensity," which is defined as "certainty, certainty about the importance of his experience, certainty about the unique value of his vision" (57–59). This observation yields the radically logocentric argument that, at Wordsworth's best, "the intensity suffusing the poem results in an extreme control that virtually reduces the statement itself to a transparency" (61). Of "Ruth," McFarland writes that "this unique certainty somehow transcends Wordsworth's formal art, and allows him in some of his greatest moments almost to forgo the re-

quirements of communication" (71). McFarland also seems to regard "intensity" as synonymous with "joy," describing "Home at Grasmere" as "an opulent lode of . . . meaning independent of translational equivalences" (80), and therefore as the depository of Wordsworth's greatness.

It is possible that, as McFarland asserts, "it is intensity alone that generates the memorable quality of Wordsworth as a poet" (88). Nonetheless, his book will do little to make this quality more accessible either to Romanticists or to that fabulous creature, the common reader. I remain puzzled, in fact, by the question of what audience McFarland hopes to reach. While scholars will take issue with the reductiveness of his interpretations, non-specialists are unlikely to respond to his manner in praising "our traditional understanding of the poem" (2). *Strange Power of Speech*, while it exemplifies so many of the evils McFarland's book deplors, is ironically the more readable—as well as by far the more insightful and challenging—of the two.

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Tennyson and the Text, by Gerhard Joseph. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Pp. xvi + 274. \$54.95.

In his excellent new book on Tennyson, Gerhard Joseph, like many contemporary critics and theorists, hovers between two critical positions. Half the time he posits "an historical Tennyson knowable more or less as he [and his works] . . . 'really' were" (6). As an alternative to this "disinterested" Arnoldian conception, Professor Joseph offers a "more self-imputing Paterian 'Tennyson,'" a poet who is "perpetually weaving, woven, and rewoven by post-Saussurean words of the ever fluctuating reader" (6). Though the problem is particularly acute today, when many Victorian scholars appear to inhabit such different worlds of discourse that they have difficulty understanding or even communicating with each other, the Victorians themselves seem to have recognized the double context—Arnoldian and Paterian—in which ideas about an author are most effectively communicated. In his essay *On the Interpretation of Scripture*, for example, Benjamin Jowett is surely right to demand of the interpreter painstaking study and research. And yet David Friedrich Strauss, with his disquieting insights in *The Life of Jesus* about the freedom of poets and critics to impose a vocabulary of their own choosing, is right too. There is no way most Victorians can affirm Jowett's doctrine of the decidability of meaning without at the same time affirming Strauss's liberating counter-truth that the dead are dead, whereas all new interpreters are alive and owe something to themselves.

The first of the two contexts I have just identified, the Arnoldian context of "disinterested objectivity," shapes the discussion in *Tennyson and the Text* in two main ways. Its influence is apparent, not just in the two chapters that bear the imprint of the "New Historicism" (chapters 4 and 6), but also in the expert discussions of the history of reception and of recent striking shifts in critical methods. Apart from Antony H. Harrison in his analysis of irony and ideology in *Maud* in the third chapter of *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*

(Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), few New Historicists have treated Tennyson. And even in Gerhard Joseph's book, the influence is indirect. *Tennyson and the Text* reminds me of a work like Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), less in its actual methodology, than in its teasingly oblique manner of presentation. As in much of Greenblatt's writing, the chapter on Julia Margaret Cameron's photography struck me at first as a highly informative but amusing digression. But picture space and frame are easy to confuse, and when I finished reading the analysis of blurred effects in both Julia Cmeron's photographs and Tennyson's verse, I realized that the anecdotes were not digressive at all. They were a point of entry into something central to both artists' achievement. I came away from the chapter with a much clearer sense of why it is difficult to understand but easy to love the momentary uncertainties of tone and syntax that leave "all the blur of being" on some of Tennyson's most beautiful and nuanced lines.

Chapter 6 on Homeric competition has a comparable power. Though I read it first as an anecdotal diversion, as another biographical trough between two high crests of theory, when I finished the chapter I realized that Professor Joseph had a different motive for introducing the rivalry between Tennyson and Gladstone for Hallam's esteem. For as Joseph later shows, Gladstone's eccentric insistence on an intimate connection between biblical and Olympian revelations illuminates in a wonderfully fresh and unexpected way the typology of Homeric type and Christian antitype at a culminating moment in the great classical monologue of Tennyson's old age, "Demeter and Persephone."

Apart from the two chapters that bear the trace of New Historicist influences, the disinterested Arnoldian view of Tennyson is most apparent in the book's masterful discussions of changes in critical practice and theory. *Tennyson and the Text* is as much about contemporary theory as it is about Tennyson: I think the most quoted authority is J. Hillis Miller, a critic and theorist who has written well but not often about Tennyson. Professor Joseph is seldom more enlightening about critical theory than when documenting new critical approaches to a single poem. He gives me the impression of having read everything ever written on "the Lady of Shalott." He covers the whole spectrum of possibilities, from New Criticism's perspectives to Hillis Miller's post-structuralist association of the Lady of Shalott with Penelope, Arachne, and Ariadne (117); from Isobel Armstrong's feminist linkage of the Lady to the enforced passivity of women (118) to Geoffrey Hartman's punning observation that the Lady of Shalott becomes in death a mere "floating signifier" (109). Whether choosing a Marxist or a deconstructionist vessel, the book keeps documenting the "contemporary shift from authored 'work' to a 'text' floating freely down to Camelot" (118).

As a "disinterested" literary historian of such a "shift," Professor Joseph is still committed to Arnoldian objectivity. Only when he crosses the boundary between literary history and criticism, as in his boldly Lacanian reading of the Lady of the Lake in "The Passing of Arthur," does he abandon the Arnoldian conception of Tennyson attributed to Christopher Ricks for "the more self-imputing Paterian 'Tennyson'" (6). In Joseph's reading, the Lady of the Lake "is a great silence, a Lacanian 'absence of the mother' at the level of

the signifier—she does not actually speak" (209). Such criticism demands a freshness of personal encounter. But because it is often based on the most minimal elements of etymology, word-play, and grammar, on tonal indecisions, puns, and the imaginative touch of two-way meanings, it seldom forfeits the chance of being proved right by avoiding the risk of being proved wrong. Even in the most autobiographical moments, when recounting an enthusiasm as a sophomore for the beauty of an elegiac passage in "Morte d'Arthur," Professor Joseph's confessional, Paterian mode is seldom separable from an energetically imaginative treatment of more objective topics in theory and history. Nor is his personal fascination with frames and recursive effects separable from original readings of a neglected poem like "At the Window" (66), or from his fine attention to the recessionary quality of Tennyson's echoes, which are well described as "the auditory equivalent of the visual time-exposure of 'picture'" (97).

Tennyson and the Text is a splendid book: I hope to adopt it as my version of *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*, promoting Gerhard Joseph as tirelessly among my acquaintances as Arnold promoted Joseph Glanvill among *his*. One source of the book's appeal to me is its bifocal vision. Professor Joseph has given Tennyson's own ambidexterity a critical voice. Like Tennyson himself, Joseph often seems to speak with a reticent ambiguity and a deeply divided mind. Refusing to falsify complexity, he invites consideration of several complexities surrounding modern criticism itself. Despite the protests of scholars who may feel their hour has come and gone, critics and theorists have to use Lacan, Marx, or Derrida to identify what is still *alive* in the past. And despite the opposition of some theorists, bridge-builders like Gerhard Joseph have still to use knowledge of manuscript revisions, including the revealing transfer of the "sinking star" passage in "Ulysses" from "Tiresias" (149), to convey the intrinsic quality and exact nature of that past.

The only rule for predicting the future of Tennyson studies is that there is no rule. One advantage of reading a critic with bifocal vision is that it guards against slavery to current fashion. If critics of Tennyson are not interested today in feminism or the political unconscious, who will listen to them? If they are still beguiled by speech-act theory or the aporias of deconstruction, some will say they have never grown up. A critic who can see the options steadily, and see them whole, is likely to recognize that any declared centre of literary interest is usually a still centre, and that what seems marginal today may move to centre stage tomorrow. Professor Joseph the Paterian shows that deconstruction and poststructuralism are necessary to familiarize what is alien in the Victorian age. Joseph the Arnoldian reminds us that historical and other more traditional forms of scholarship are also necessary to rebuild the past and present Tennyson's art and mind as the poet himself might have done if he were addressing space travellers from a different world and time.

The Critics Bear It Away: American Fiction and the Academy by Frederick Crews. New York: Random House, 1992. Pp. xxi + 213. \$20.00.

Frederick Crews's new collection is an important event, first, because of its avowed commitment to liberalism and, second, because of the tensions that infuse his particular version of liberalism. The publication of Crews's book and Gerald Graff's *Beyond the Culture Wars* in the fall of 1992 marks a turning-point: after a long period dominated by repetitious but highly publicized conservative attacks on the revision of the literary canon, suddenly a revitalized liberalism has moved to the fore and is reclaiming the cultural center from which it had been displaced. This shift within the field of education coincides with and is accentuated by the election of a new President whose political success was based in part on a positive appeal to cultural inclusion. What does Crews contribute to our understanding of liberalism at this moment of its potential resurgence?

What occupies the reclaimed center in *The Critics Bear It Away* is the drama of Crews's divided critical identity. His liberalism is made up of two voices so divergent that it is never clear how they can be coordinated: hence the constant spark of tension across the gap. The first voice bespeaks a sarcastic resistance to canon revision that is virtually indistinguishable from the conservative line. The second voice, however, makes common cause with the revisionist effort. This latter voice, most eloquently expressed in the superb essays on Hemingway and Updike, prevents Crews from becoming totally identified with the conservative impulse. The usual conservative response to the revisionist message is to kill or suppress the messenger. Crews's paradox is that he cannot follow this strategy because with one part of himself he is the messenger.

This internal conflict is built into the structure of the collection. The book's title exemplifies the acerbic conservative side of Crews's critical operation. It is drawn from the title of one of the least impressive essays in the book, an essay on Flannery O'Connor that unconvincingly undercuts his own "liberal sentiments" (161) in favor of an apologist posture. Fortunately, this title is a highly misleading indication of the interest and complexity of the volume's overall contents. In direct contrast are the guidelines provided by the Introduction, where Crews clearly differentiates his views from those of the conservative roster. Nevertheless, the Introduction has an *ex post facto* quality that exacerbates rather than relieves the internal conflict. Crews has good reason to fear that he could be mistaken for a simple conservative and that a clarification, however belated, was needed. But the useful Introduction often sits in uneasy relation to the essays it introduces; since the two do not always square with each other, the reader is forced to wonder who is the real Frederick Crews.

A similar tension can be discerned in the structure of his career as a whole. In a summary overview, Crews, now age 60, can be said to have spent the first half of his career building critical systems and the second half dissecting and dismantling them. His early work consists of books on Henry James (1957), E. M. Forster (1962), and Hawthorne (1966). I still retain fond, respectful memories of having the study on James as one of my companions when writing my own, very different senior thesis on the late novels at Am-

herst College a decade later in 1966-67; I record this detail to suggest the extent to which the present review should be considered a labor of love. The two relatively marginal books, *The Pooh Perplex* (1963) and *The Patch Commission* (1968), are transitional works that afford glimpses of the powerful satirical (one might even say deconstructive) tendencies that will assume center stage in Crews's second phase. In this latter stage, Crews's medium becomes the short essay and the review article, with the result that the more recent books are essay collections: *Out of My System* (1975), *Skeptical Engagements* (1986), and the present volume. The title *Out of My System* is emblematic of the occupational hazard that goes with Crews's devotion to skepticism: his satirical ability to see through all positions, including his own, implies a self-consuming aspect that makes it difficult for Crews fully to inhabit his own convictions. It is a measure of Crews's high integrity that he makes the pattern of his career a conscious theme. The first chapter of *The Critics Bear It Away* applies this title to Crews himself by highlighting the signature sequence in his life as critic: his psychoanalytic study of Hawthorne, his subsequent rejection of that approach, and, third, his retrospective assessment of these moves in the account reprinted here.

In my estimation, the final essay—an acutely critical analysis of John Updike—is by far the strongest in the collection and I think it is worth asking why. What arouses, infuriates, Crews is Updike's glibly stereotyped dismissal of liberalism. Elsewhere in the collection Crews cites liberal values, especially with regard to race, only to downplay or disqualify such expectations. Here, however, Crews fully engages and firmly articulates the liberal perspective. The difference is that Crews is writing directly about Updike, not about another critic's study of Updike. The absence of an intermediary upsets the usual dynamic of a Crews review in which he feels bound to set other critics straight and to protect the author. In this case, Crews as forthright liberal critic magnificently bears Updike away.

In sum, it would be far too easy to conclude that if Crews's overall approach satisfies neither Peter Shaw (*Commentary*, January 1993) on the one hand nor me on the other, then he must be doing something right—he must have struck the right balance. But what Crews's book achieves is less balance than ambivalence, an ambivalence directly traceable to his stance on liberalism. The role of liberalism in Crews's criticism is an issue of long standing, as witness the reaction to student anti-Vietnam war demonstrations of the late sixties in *The Patch Commission*. Beneath the easy surface humor of this fictional report lies a preoccupation with a liberalism caught between two unsatisfactory images: "the Lilliputian solipsists of contemporary liberalism" (24) and "realistic, hard-nosed liberalism" (117). The book's satirical pose fails because it is unable to resolve this dilemma or even to begin to come to grips with the deeply problematic status of liberalism. Crews's uncertain direction here can be suggested by considering the related work of his Berkeley colleague John R. Searle in *The Campus War* (1971). Searle knows where he stands and has no trouble negotiating the contradictions in his stand—he proudly displays his credentials as an anti-McCarthyite liberal while strongly advocating the containment of student protest. Should we read Crews's *Patch Commission* as a send-up of Searle's position or an affirmation of it? It is impossible to tell.

If, however, we shift forward twenty years to the present, there is a clear difference between Searle's "Storm Over the University" (*New York Review of Books*, December 6, 1990) and Crews's Introduction to this collection. Or, to take another example, Crews's current thinking also clearly differs from that of Hilton Kramer, who argues that conservatives are now the true defenders of liberalism ("Mrs. Cheney's Departure," *The New Criterion*, January 1993; ". . . and never the twain shall meet?: A Conversation with Suzi Gablik and Hilton Kramer," *New Art Examiner*, January 1993). Although Crews's previous collection included two pieces originally published in *The New Criterion*, Crews here dissociates himself from Kramer's journal by repudiating the simplistic views of its managing editor Roger Kimball (xiv).

The great value of Crews's new collection is to show that his liberalism differs from Searle's liberalism and Kramer's liberalism and thereby to demonstrate that liberalism is not one single position but takes multiple and varied forms. The great limitation is that Crews does not sufficiently reflect on how and why these differences within liberalism occur. He makes do with a minimalist definition of liberalism (xxi) that is asked to carry more philosophical weight than it can bear.

Given his explicit commitment to a liberal vision, Crews cannot justify his incuriosity as a legitimate lack of interest in theory or politics. His own critical stance requires a fuller elaboration of the different versions of liberalism. Otherwise, vital questions he implicitly raises remain unanswered and unexplored: what kinds of liberalism are compatible with what kinds of multicultural criticism? The notion of multiple possibilities means that there may be more room, and hence more need, for rigorous discussion than is customarily assumed.

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The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History by José David Saldívar. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991. Pp. xvii + 213. \$32.50, cloth; \$12.95, paper.

This book is a promising attempt to define an oppositional pan-American poetics and literary history. It grew out of Saldívar's essay "The Dialectics of Our America," in the collection *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* edited by Gustavo Pérez Firmat (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990). Pérez Firmat's collection is designed to place the literatures of the Americas in a hemispheric context and focus our attention on inter-American literary relations, but not to propose a particular theory of these. In his study, Saldívar does work toward a systematic delineation of commonalities among United States and Latin American literatures, but he does not attempt so general a comparison of pan-American themes and genres as does Earl Fitz in his recent *Discovering the New World: Inter-American Literature in a Comparative Context* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991). Rather, he examines a particular set of historical and ideological relations—between the Havana journal, publishing house and cultural center Casa de las Américas,

Latin American *nueva narrativa* (the tradition exemplified by such writers as Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez), and minority U.S. writing—and locates in and among these an oppositional discourse which is rooted in the “New World” but crosses the hemisphere’s national, cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Thus Saldívar does not insist on the traditional and often unwieldy geographical/linguistic oppositions of Europe and America or North and South, but instead engages a more provocative and, for me, a more productive division, the tension vividly described by the Cuban writer and revolutionary José Martí in his seminal essay “Nuestra America” (“Our America,” 1891), to which Saldívar’s title alludes. Here Martí opposes the United States as imperial power to a Latin America that stands to be increasingly dominated by its northern neighbor, and the Latin American elites who collude with the neo-colonial project and read their national histories and cultures through a Eurocentric lens to a solidary Latin America—“Our America”—which recognizes the value of the popular and indigenous elements in its culture and creates its own cultural paradigms. To read this essay in conjunction with Martí’s journalistic pieces on United States society, composed during his long exile in New York (1881–1895), is to see that “Our America” can be understood to include United States groups excluded from or oppressed by our dominant (imperialist) cultural and political paradigm. It is in this spirit that Saldívar invokes Martí’s work and uses it as a base for his own.

Saldívar begins his first chapter with a discussion of the recent expansion of the United States’ literary canon and revision of “the theoretical boundaries within which American literary history and interpretation unfold” (3) by such scholars as Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen. Pointing out that Bercovitch’s history of United States literature in *Reconstructing American Literary History* (1986) “resembles Bakhtin’s description of the novelistic form: it is often marked by a clashing plurality of discourses, fragments, and a polyethnic system of . . . codes” (3), he announces his intent to add to this new literary history the oppositional voice(s) of Our America. He makes it clear that he does not wish simply to point out the diversity of the hemisphere, but to “[map] out the common situation shared by different cultures” so as to “[allow] their differences to be measured against each other as well as against the (North) American grain” (4).

This new movement in United States literary history, Martí’s essay, and a piece that pays homage to Martí’s while radicalizing its premise—“Calibán: Apuntes sobre la cultura de nuestra América” (Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America,” 1971) by Roberto Fernández Retamar, editor of *Casa de las Américas*—together provide Saldívar’s critical matrix. In his essay Fernández Retamar, using Martí’s concept of “Our America” and critiquing the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó’s elitist comparison, in *Ariel* (1900), of the Latin American intellectual to Shakespeare’s Ariel, argues that the “metaphor [most] expressive of our cultural situation, our reality” (14) is Prospero’s more abject slave and avowed enemy, Caliban. Caliban’s rebuke to the colonizer Prospero—“You taught me language, and my profit on’t/ Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/ For learning me your language!” (1.2.362–64)—becomes in Fernández Retamar’s hands a model for oppositional intellectual work. Following this lead, Saldívar suggests that a

critical practice appropriate to Our America will assume a dialectical exchange (rather than static division or conflation) between national cultures in the Americas and, in Saldívar's words, between "global history and local knowledge" (xiv).

Saldívar is interested in Fernández Retamar not just for his literary theory but also for his intellectual leadership and his work as editor and publisher. Central in Saldívar's book is a discussion of the power of institutions to shape the literary canon. Thus Saldívar traces the influence Latin American *nueva narrativa* has had on contemporary "ethnic" literature of the United States, thanks in large part to Casa de las Américas' inclusion of United States minority writers in its conferences and workshops and its 1976 award of its most prestigious prize to Chicano writer Rolando Hinojosa. "Havana has become," Saldívar says, "[in] literature, film, and politics . . . an alternative capital of the Americas" which makes visible "a new, pan-American postcolonial identity" (15). This is the identity of the collective, oppositional "Calibanic self" (148) who contests the gaze of the colonizer Prospero and throws light on our world from a very different perspective. And the anchor of the Calibanic self's critical practice, Fernández Retamar points out, is an "understanding and evaluation of the vision of history presented in [Latin American novels]" (*Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989], 33), as against the formalist, aesthetically-oriented criticism most commonly supported in United States universities and cultural institutions.

This emphasis on history informs Saldívar's book. Part I, "Metahistory and Dependency," includes a first chapter on Martí and Retamar, a second on García Márquez, and a third on Hinojosa. This part shows how these authors' works incorporate and comment on the common history of oppressed and marginalized groups in the Americas, and traces the way in which the last three have worked together to create an alternative to the dominant (formally, rather than historically oriented) form of literary production in this hemisphere, as well as in much of the West. Part II, "Magical Narratives," which includes chapters on African-American writer Nzotake Shange and Chicano writer Arturo Islas, examines the influence of Latin American magic realism on both authors, and posits magic realism as an oppositional, collective way of telling history. Part III, "Caliban and Resistance Cultures," is comprised of a chapter on the twentieth century (counter-)tradition of "Our American" appropriations and reworkings of *The Tempest*, in which history and culture are rethought from the viewpoint of Caliban, rather than reproduced from that of Prospero, and an afterword on "borderland" or hybrid cultures in the postcolonial world. The relationship of each writer and/or work to institutional power structures, both hegemonic and counterhegemonic, is studied throughout, and the interdependency and relationality of culture(s) in the postcolonial world are emphasized.

The broadest lines of Saldívar's discussion lead to magic realism as oppositional history, and (cultural) "hybridity" as oppositional theoretical position. One may disagree with him on some implications of these arguments, but this in no way detracts from the great amount there is to be learned from his book, which is filled with important interpretive and theoretical insights as well as historical information not easy to come by. In bringing together com-

plex bodies of literary and sociological theory, and uniting these with detailed and sensitive readings of a wide range of literary texts, this study accomplishes much more than many others of its genre set out to do.

As is the case with most pioneering works, there are in *The Dialectics of Our America* loose ends that are not tied up and questions that are not answered. I, for instance, missed a discussion of gender in García Márquez and a less utopian perspective on the concepts of "hybridity" and "betweenness," which have become near clichés in recent studies of postcolonial literature. Saldívar's prose is also rough at some points—he uses jargon where it is not absolutely necessary, and he tends to be too loose in his use of philosophical and theoretical terms (e.g. "Stylistically, the author uses his dialogical imagination to depict a changing historical materialism in South Texas" [68]).

But if the book seems unfinished in some ways, it is also far more ambitious than most. It is an important as well as a timely study, since the increasing attention given to cultural studies and ethnic and postcolonial literatures in English departments has led to a renewed interest in Latin American literature among scholars of Anglo-American and Comparative Literature. *The Dialectics of Our America* is a valuable resource as well as an excellent model for future comparative work on the literatures of the Americas.

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A History of Russian Literature by Victor Terras. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992. Pp. 654. \$45.00.

It is a pleasure to review Victor Terras's superbly written and beautifully printed book. Terras's versatile expertise and scholarly skill allow him to discuss with equal ease and authority all periods, movements, and genres in the near millennium of Russian literary development. His talent as a writer ensures that this discussion makes for delightful reading. The book's excellent critical apparatus guarantees its usefulness, making it an invaluable addition to any scholar's library.

Terras starts with a short but informative chapter on Russian folklore. He describes its principal genres (the folk song, folk tale, and folk drama), mentions smaller ones in passing, and discusses folklore's status in Russian society, as well as its interaction with written literature in different historical periods. Three chapters on Old Russian literature follow. They cover three periods: the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, and the seventeenth century. The Tatar invasion naturally serves as a milestone between the two earlier periods, and the literature of the seventeenth century, which stands half-way between medieval and modern Russian literature, is rightly given a separate chapter. One can only regret that this superb overview of Old Russian literature does not provide a more coherent interpretation of the chronicles.

Chapter Five offers a discussion of the eighteenth century and is organized by genre (Poetry, Drama, Prose Fiction, and Criticism), a fitting approach for a literature that regarded genre as of paramount importance, with the au-

thor's personality as only marginally relevant. Actually, even more emphasis on the theory of genres and especially on the eighteenth-century hierarchical approach to genres would be warranted. The fact that poetry was more prestigious than prose and that within poetry epics and lyrics were considered more valuable than elegies and songs, was fundamental to the eighteenth-century literary consciousness. I also confess to disappointment with Terras's treatment of Aleksandr Sumarokov, a writer who has been unlucky with American scholars. Simon Karlinsky, in his *Russian Drama*, denied Sumarokov any merit as a playwright, and he is seriously underrated in the present book as well. The first full-time writer in the history of Russian literature, a man "passionate about his art" (to cite Pushkin), Sumarokov created not only Russian drama (however outmoded for the modern reader it might seem), but Russian love lyrics as well. He left scores of superb love songs and elegies. Furthermore, Sumarokov had a wonderful gift for parody: his parodies of Trediakovsky's and, especially, of Lomonosov's poetry are truly hilarious. The next literary generation belittled him, but this should not have prevented a more objective evaluation of his legacy in historical perspective.

The next two chapters are devoted to nineteenth-century literature. Chapter Six discusses what Terras has chosen to call the Romantic period (which in fact also includes Sentimentalism and the so-called Natural school). It opens with an excellent discussion of Romantic philosophy and aesthetics. An overview of the Golden Age of Russian poetry, in which Pushkin is given the central place, follows. The Western reader should especially appreciate Terras's illuminating explanation of Pushkin's outstanding reputation among Russians; his perceptive comment that Russians see Pushkin as a "hero in the Carlylian sense" (204) helps account for the discrepancy between the poet's reputations in his native culture and in the West. The informed and skillful analysis of Nikolai Gogol's works, included in this chapter, is also not to be missed.

Chapter Seven, "The Age of the Novel," which includes, among other things, a discussion of all great Russian novels, is my favorite. Given the multitude and variety of names, works, movements, groups, and issues, the chapter is very well-structured and, at the same time, conveys an excellent impression of the vibrant literary life of the period. The discussions of both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are excellent. Ivan Goncharov and Turgenev are treated expertly and fairly. The extraordinary influence of Nikolai Chernyshevsky's criticism and his novel *What Is To Be Done?* is rightly noted and explained. Nikolai Leskov, however, is not given full justice. Too much space is wasted on his second-rate antinihilist novels, which merit at best a mention in an overview of this genre, while his most important original work is underestimated. Leskov's writings evade easy interpretation because that was one of the writer's goals, not because of his inability to integrate "an ideological argument, an allegorical meaning, or metaphorical symbolism into a story line" (362). I believe that Leskov still awaits his Bakhtin, as well as his translator.

The chapter on the Silver Age (a term that Terras uses, perhaps, a bit too inclusively here) covers the period from 1881, the year when Alexander II was assassinated, to 1917. Unlike the eighteenth century, the generic principle of organization does not work well here. The reader cannot help feeling

that chronology is violated when the discussion turns from twentieth-century poetry (Osip Mandelstam, Mikhail Kuzmin, or Maksimilian Voloshin) back to Tolstoy, Chekhov, and the Populist prose of the 1880's and 1890's. This flaw, however, does not undermine the discussions of particular issues and literary figures, which are consistently superb. The competent and detailed overview of poetry before Symbolism deserves special praise. This wasteland in the landscape of Russian poetry rarely receives attention, even though discussion of such poets as Aleksei Apukhtin and Semyon Nadson is all the more important given their surprising popularity among their contemporaries.

I would like to see only one addition to Terras's excellent treatment of Symbolism: a discussion of *zhiznetvorchestvo* or mythmaking in real life, i.e., the Symbolists' obsession with arranging their personal lives in accordance to certain models. Viacheslav Ivanov's life, as well as the complex and often tragic relations between Aleksandr Blok and his wife, between Blok and Andrei Bely, and between Bely and Valery Bryusov, can be understood only in this mythmaking context. Moreover, *zhiznetvorchestvo* was not only an organizing principle in the Russian Symbolists' private lives, but also an integral part of their aesthetics.

The Soviet period, discussed in Chapter Nine, presents special challenges. One actually faces the histories of several separate literatures: official Soviet literature, whose literary theory was the infamous Socialist Realism; clandestine literature, which in many cases surfaced only many years after it had been written and thus was an integral part of both the literary context in which it was written as well as the one in which it was read; Emigré literature, which struggled to survive and flourish in the West; and finally what Terras calls literature "outside the mainstream" (594), that is, literary works whose authors managed to disregard the intense ideological challenges of their age, turning to such unpolitical themes as nature and childhood (as Mikhail Prishvin and Konstantin Paustovsky did) or fantasy and adventure (as Aleksandr Grin did). Some authors belonged to more than one category. Terras accomplishes the complex task of writing about such heterogeneous material with intelligence, grace, and skill. I especially recommend Terras' treatment of Andrei Platonov, a first-rate writer virtually unknown in the West due to his idiosyncratic style.

A short but well-selected bibliography concludes the book. It contains general, English-language works only. Some additional bibliography can be picked up from footnotes. Since the book offers such an impressive in-depth discussion and wealth of information, one wonders whether it might also have provided more bibliography. A monograph or two on major authors, to give the interested reader guidance, would have been helpful.

Given the monumental task of writing a complete history of Russian literature, Terras's book is surprisingly thorough. Its author's erudition is truly amazing. However minor a writer, one can invariably find his or her name in the index. The book also has pleasantly few mistakes (the one mistaken statement that I would like to correct is that Vasily Trediakovsky's translation of Paul Tallement's novel *Voyage à l'isle d'Amour* (1730) was done in verse; both original and translation are in prose, although both include some poetry). An excellent index allows easy access to the book's wealth of the information. I highly recommend this book for all purposes: as a textbook in Rus-

sian literature survey courses, as a reference book for scholars working with Russian material, and simply as a reading for everyone interested in Russian literature.

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Recreating the World/Word: Mythic Mode as Symbolic Discourse by Lynda D. McNeil. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992. Pp. 326. \$18.95.

One of the persistent dangers of an interdisciplinary approach to literary criticism lies in the slippery and mutable boundaries of the philosophical and semantic terms that a critic employs. Often, critics incorporate terms or phrases from psychology or semiotics whose fluid definitions become blurred or distorted as the critic sets about elucidating his or her particular perspective. One of the prominent virtues of Lynda McNeil's *Recreating the World/Word* is her consistent clarification and extension of the terms she borrows from philosophy, anthropology and psychology. She avoids the pitfall of relying on malleable and indefinite terms by carefully explaining the significance and pertinent implications of the concepts she adopts and extends from other thinkers in her discussion of the mythopoetic mode in literature.

Recreating the World/Word spends most of its intellectual energy in establishing connections between developments in philosophy, linguistics and psychology and relating them to a critical examination of "mythic" poets like Arthur Rimbaud, Georg Trakl, Hart Crane and Charles Olson. McNeil's primary contribution in the book is not advancing the notion that these artists use methods that demand efforts on the reader's part to suspend logical and rational predispositions in order to appreciate these poets; what does represent a significant achievement is her attempt to ground this perspective in a philosophical and linguistic framework that justifies approaching these artists from a mythopoetic discourse structure.

The provocative initial chapters work assiduously toward providing an overview of the philosophical developments which have influenced post-modern critical theory. McNeil proposes that the most fruitful approach sees the perception of art not as either the work of centripetal or centrifugal forces acting through the reader's interaction with the text but a "hovering" between the two derived from Freidrich Schlegel's inquiries in the eighteenth century. A good degree of this groundwork extends the conclusions reached by Lawrence Cahoon in *The Dilemma of Modernity: Philosophy, Culture and Anti-Culture* (1988). However, McNeil further suggests that Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of the "hermeneutics of play" represents a mediating position between the opposed approaches of demythologization and demystification in contemporary theory.

McNeil's treatment in the first chapter establishes a philosophical paradigm shift from the enlightenment that raises notions which replay themselves out in postmodern thought. The dominant epistemology of Western rationalist-empiricism solidified in the seventeenth-century explorations of Descartes, Kant and Locke. Whereas this perspective saw reason as a particu-

lar cognitive faculty distinct and separate from perception, a counter-episteme arose from the speculations of J. G. Herder, whose concept of *Besonnenheit* (reflectiveness) proposed that reason is more accurately thought of as the essential process of thinking rather than a particular operation. McNeil cites the central tenet of Herder's more organic or integrated aspect of experience and perception: "it is not the external object as such which is the determinant of what we perceive, but the perceiving mind" (32).

However, Herder's counter-episteme did not relegate consciousness to mere subjectivity but anticipated the views of twentieth-century thinkers like Winnicott, Cassirer and Dewey who came to see culture functioning in a mediating role in human experience. McNeil proceeds to make connections between Bakhtin's ideas in *The Dialogic Imagination* with those of Herder's epistemology: language, or we might say culture, is the "other" that we internalize and recreate as our own. In this sense, recreation becomes the process whereby new myths are generated as well as becoming an analogue for the hermeneutical pursuit of meaning.

McNeil traces the transmission of Herder's thought through the German post-Kantian idealists who saw the construction of "new mythologies," adaptations or recreations of ancient myths into modern experience, as an effort to restore an original, integrated state in the species or individual; thinkers like Hegel, Schlegel, and even later Martin Heidegger, conceive of mythic thinking as a "past-oriented, nostalgic restoration . . . an integrated psycho-linguistic state prior to the 'fall'" (39) into the dualities of Aristotelean logic and language as well as the subject-object dichotomies of rationalist-empiricist epistemologies. McNeil relates this counter-episteme to Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the "bricoleur" who assembles a conglomeration of *bricolage* (or debris from the past) into new structures, a type of mythic thinking distinguished from scientific thought in that the newly structured sets of mythic thought do not build directly on previous structured sets. More simply, the intuitive mode of myth-making represents a co-present mode of thought which complements and interacts with the more analytical or linear mode of literate, rational, logical thought.

In the last sections of Part I, McNeil draws parallels between the mythopoeic mode of discourse and the developmental linguistics of Vygotsky's work with childhood thinking as well as clinical research into ecstatic mental states by Roland Fischer. In each of these pre-literate modes of thought, the subject/object split of dualistic logic and language gets replaced by symbolic logic and language more appropriate to expressions by the undifferentiated self. McNeil associates Schlegel's notion of philosophical irony, a "hovering" between fictional creation in art and the simultaneous subjection of that creation to scrutiny and rejection, with Gadamer's "hermeneutics of play." The latter will yield a more useful mediating critical position between the extremes of demythologization and demystification dominant in literary criticism today.

One of the strengths of McNeil's approach is her recurrent juxtaposition of the aesthetic or philosophical development of the counter-epistemology she is elucidating alongside its psycholinguistic implications. This sort of commentary generally comes through in well-crafted interdisciplinary studies, but McNeil's recapitulations are particularly apt and cogent. However, stylist-

ically she relies too often on parenthetical insertions to establish connections between the matter at hand and previous lines of thought. Parentheses litter the landscape of McNeil's book in a sometimes overwhelming fashion. While she rings a number of changes in their function, sometimes using them as correlations and at other times as elaborations or clarifications of the ideas being discussed, occasionally the parenthetical additions impede the linear development of her argument. Students unfamiliar with postmodern innovations should benefit by and large from this treatment, especially in making cross-connections between various lines of inquiry in psychology, philosophy or linguistics, but the practice as a general rule should be de-emphasized in future editions. The intermittent odd punctuation may also prove troublesome for readers comfortable with conventional sentence structure.

To a degree, though, this stylistic oddity of abundant parentheses may derive from McNeil's subject matter. After all, the poets she examines rely heavily on accretion and the building up of associational chains of meaning and phrasing, so her preponderance of parenthetical loops and recursive discourse structures evolves naturally from grappling with these difficult poems. In addition, much of the clinical material McNeil incorporates into her discussion employs the same sort of awkward clumping of parenthetical explanations that seems to have become endemic to the medical profession and clinical psychology in general. Who has not recognized how writers internalize the methods used by writers to whom they are responding? In a way, we might say one's writing style develops along the same lines as one's spoken accent; each of us picks up a style or accent subconsciously from the cultural conversations to which we are exposed.

Part II of *Recreating the World/Word* demonstrates how readers can view the poems of Rimbaud, Trakl, Crane and Olson from a mythopoetic perspective that enlivens our appreciation and experiencing of the poems while re-enacting their recreational drive toward undifferentiated Being. McNeil carefully situates her own mythopoetic analysis in the relevant strains of scholarship and theory surrounding each of the poets she examines. The strongest presentation of her method occurs in the discussion of Rimbaud. She implies that his poems generate a climate whose reception should not focus on the indeterminacies that their "uncertainty" produces thematically or semantically as the New Critical and Deconstructionist positions emphasize; instead, reading mythopoetically allows the reader to enter the dialectical play in the poems between the creation of an undifferentiated state of Being and its ironic undermining by the temporality of language and vision. As she does with all four subjects, McNeil then traces the epistemological revisions and semantic techniques Rimbaud develops over his brief career.

In each of the chapters on the poets, McNeil shows how the episteme behind Gadamer's "hermeneutics of play" not only mirrors the process of myth-making which the poems enact but enriches our experiencing of the poems as well. The book as a whole provides a copious and lucid overview of the scholarship relevant to her study. In addition to the hints toward areas where future explorations might be successful within the main text, and more particularly in the epilogue, the bibliography also provides students with many starting points for research. The notes themselves generously comment on the running text; extensive and well organized, they carry on their own inte-

rior conversation (generally contextualizing the literary and philosophical assumptions of modern criticism) almost as a subtext while still engaging in a dialogue with the main text.

Like the myth-makers she examines who weave together disparate strands of "bricolage" to create a new whole, McNeil brings together a wide array of philosophical, linguistic, anthropological, psychological and literary concepts into a stunning synthesis. *Recreating the World/Word's* critical contribution is considerable; for too long the need for a text which provides the structural tools and methods for investigating the work of "mad" poets has gone unmet.

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