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Sweetness and Light in Retrospect: On the Institution of English Studies

The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848–1932 by Chris Baldick. New York: The Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1983. Pp. 250. $37.50.

It has frequently been argued that the study of English literature is in "crisis." At the same time, so broadly has the literary institution become naturalized in education that it is rarely recognized just how recent is the emergence of "English" in its privileged curricular place, or how deeply its emergence, consolidation, and particular shape have from the beginning been entangled with the ideological structures, objectives, and fortunes of literary criticism. The novelty of contemporary literary disputes rests on the sharp challenges raised against the canons and traditional assumptions of both English Literature and literary criticism by a rising oppositional network within the literary institution.

This network links together dissident currents from structuralist, post-structuralist, Marxist, feminist, and other non-canonical or pre-canonical quarters, writing on behalf of non-canonical or pre-canonical texts, audiences, and critical or theoretical models. As a result, the status, integrity, stability, and legitimacy of both the received canons of Literature and Criticism and also of the methodological assumptions pertinent to the procedures through which these canons are produced—indeed, the basic paradigmatic parameters of the object of knowledge and the modes of knowing on which the literary institution is established—have become subjected to increasingly vigorous and rigorous questioning.

Chris Baldick's book places itself within this oppositional network, with the intention of denaturalizing established literary criticism and revealing it, within the period he examines (Arnold to the Leavises), as an ideological practice moving in what he considers an increasingly "conservative and obscurantist direction" (p. 234). This strategic decision is supported by two important tactical manoeuvres, designed to redress "shortcomings" (p. 3) in the oppositional posture. There is, first, an argument that the discipline of English studies should examine its own history, that is, attended to the historiography of criticism as an independent field which is not only not parasitic on literature (as secondary interpretation), but which is primarily constitutive of the judgments and procedures that account for the identification of what is Literature, especially English (read: National) literature.

The mutations in the dominant meaning of "literature," as Raymond Williams and others have shown, display continual narrowing from the seventeenth century (when it referred to printed texts) through the nineteenth century (when it was restricted to imaginative works) through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (when it came to signify in particular the minority of texts legitimated by criticism as part of the canon of Literature, or even more narrowly, English Literature). Baldick's concern is with the final moments in this process of selective specialization, the moments when the modern English literary institution (Criticism, in its pedagogic gloves, shaping the object, Literature) was being founded.

If this consolidation of a selective tradition were only an internal matter of literary studies, perhaps uncovering its logic and intentionality would have a scholarly significance of somewhat limited scope. But if critics are accepted as self-appointed authorities in social as well as literary comment, and if criticism is seen as responding to problems posed by society in a given historical moment, then the urgency of historiographic reconstruction is experienced with wider reference. Thus Baldick's first tactical move is reinfored with a second: the argument to recognize literary criticism, at least in the founding period, as an unavoidably composite discourse, reaching economic, political, and judicial registers, and sustained by premising a continuity and drawing constant analogies (implicitly or explicitly) between the literary order and the social order.

On this account, from Arnold to the Leavises, the social, political, and religious interests of the literary critics simply cannot be isolated as separate pursuits from their literary criticism proper. Perhaps it is not overstretching the point to suggest that the broader strategic value of this kind of historiographic reconstruction of literary discourse as a social-ideological practice is to direct continuing attention, beyond the boundaries of the period that Baldick examines, to the dense imbrication of both social and literary interests in even the most professionally specialized variant articulations of the contemporary literary institution.

In short, then, Baldick sets out to reconstruct the social objectives of the pioneer critics and educationalists who established modern English studies and to review their ideas on the social functions of criticism. He writes, in introduction: "My approach has been a deliberately unsophisticated attempt to drag back into the light the views taken by the founders of modern English studies and literary criticism regarding the wider social effects and aims of this activity; to restore to what is now a severely truncated vision of criticism's recent past those neglected but essential statements of its original purpose as an active participant in society" (p. 3). He will then be concerned to find relationships between, for example, the new vocabulary of "culture" and the political/economic requirements of national unity and class reconciliation, that is, between the emergence of English studies with its increasingly sacred social mission to civilize, cultivate, in brief "to save us" (as Richards wrote), and the very profane interests of social order, political hegemony, class compromise, and cultural hierarchy.

What Baldick offers in eight chapters is a review of the Arnoldian tradition up to the founding of *Scrutiny*—in effect a useful, if much less dense, companion volume to Francis Mulhern's *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* (1979). In an introduction and conclusion, a chapter each on Arnold, Eliot, Richards and the Leavises, and two sketchy but valuable chapters on the social-cultural-ideological milieu that supported the rise of English studies, the text reconstructs the views of the founding fathers—largely in their own terms, but with a critical commentary that becomes increasingly foregrounded as Baldick's impatience with Richards and the Leavises and what he perceives (and sometimes misperceives) as their vacuous conservative ideological posturings becomes sharper and less contained.

Perhaps the most interesting two sections of the book in some respects are the contextual chapters 3 and 4 which trace the institutional evolution of En-

glish studies and show to what extent the movement for English studies (with its Arnoldian project of a disinterested intelligentsia far removed from practical and political concerns) was carried by the very practical concerns and objectives of the call for extension education (for the workers), women's education (in the women's colleges), and diplomatic education (for the colonial service). These chapters also dramatize to what extent (following on the famous Newbolt Report, 1921, *The Teaching of English in England*) English studies owed its successful institutionalization as the keystone of national education to currents of post-war patriotic chauvinism and spiritualism that moved to link national pride and education through a cultural cement which was expected to unite the classes in respect for the national heritage.

On the whole, the rest of the material is not altogether unfamiliar: quite apart from the literary graduate industry which now studies primary sources, since the 1960s a number of published volumes by scholars in England and North America (including Perry Anderson, Terry Eagleton, Francis Mulhern, D. J. Palmer, Patrick Parrinder, Raymond Williams, the Birmingham School, the American reader-response theorists, and myself, to name only a few) have contributed to a historiographic recollection of the Anglo-American tradition. These writings, like Baldick's, have been concerned to raise not only the question of the rise of English studies and the literary institution in general but also the question of the rise of English studies and the literary institution in general but also the question of the remarkable breadth of its engagement with nearly the entire ideological field, far beyond the special province that its terminological destination would tend to suggest.

In the end, the great virtue of the book's "unsophisticated" quasi-archeological approach is to re-construct and re-present, and therefore make freshly visible and intelligible (even as a target for attack), the multiple layerings and overlayerings of common categories, themes, motifs, and intentions (e.g. the concept of order, the idea of substituting aesthetics for religion, the critiques of science, history, intellectualism, mass culture, etc.) that (among other things) make up the continuities of a tradition. The textual work is so useful, in fact and so stimulating in producing materials that can be readily recontextualized by the reader into other relationships, other constellations of concerns, that perhaps the prosecutors of intentional fallacy will sheathe their swords and accept this text for what it can offer. The textual reconstruction, plus the sustained reminders of just how recently it was that English studies —a powerful ideological tradition—became instituted and institutionalized, provide a significant contribution.

I think it fair to note, though this may be no criticism of the book as it stands in the light of its own project, that its strength is also its weakness. The "unsophisticated" approach makes do without the historiographic density or the theoretical apparatus that could prepare the way for coming to terms effectively either with the culture-society tradition and the major turning point in it that the Arnoldian intervention represents (combining, as it does without mediation, an affirmative culture thesis with a social phenomenology of alienation); or with those relationships between this tradition and the eventually divergent American traditions that account for what unites them and divides their development; or with the vulnerabilities of this tradition to the recent incursions from hostile French structural currents, probably as a result of both its own lacunae and also its own inner structural drift.

Perhaps most disabling in a text so disarmed of "sophistication" is then its inability finally to theorize the major crisis of the whole social order to which the tradition under review offered to respond and to respond hegemonically by moving to dominate a broad spectrum of cultural and social analysis. To be sure, what I am lamenting here is the absence of major intellectual ambition and conceptual power. In its absence, Baldick's critical commentary falls back implicitly on a received leftism to challenge a received culturalism. This is an all too familiar posture, a variant of Mulhern's description of the function of culturalist discourse as a repression of the political. One would not quarrel with this if one could overlook the repressive residualism of a nineteenth century theoretical politicism that equally represses the cultural. What needs to be theorized is the reciprocal censorship exercised by culturalism and politicism (not to mention economism).

This, moreover, needs to be theorized in the context of changes within a historical social formation, in particular reaching an appraisal of cultural mutation at the levels of social structure, social action, and everyday life, and taking into account especially the changing tendencies in signifying practices and what Jean Baudrillard intriguingly calls "the aestheticization of reality." The historiographer would be well served by getting much closer to the stunning sense of volatility that linked Arnold and Marx: in the latter's words, that "everything melts into the air"; in the words of Arnold, arguing for the "immense future" of his aestheticist program: "there is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve." In this context, Arnold's striking insight that first articulates the inclusiveness and complexity for which his whole legacy argues rings with a truth and hope that leaps the gap otherwise dividing his age from contemporary post-structuralism: "Not deep the poet sees but wide."

It would perhaps have been impossible for Baldick to touch on all of these concerns significantly, or to accommodate the many intellectual programs that others may consider relevant to the object of his inquiries. The text that he did produce, though unambitious theoretically, does recognizably make a modest but real contribution to the same agenda from whose point of view these questions are raised, and does effectively assist the oppositional currents in the literary institution whose efforts he endorses. This is an intelligently and articulately written, readable, unpretentious, useful and congenial work of literary scholarship, and it should find a welcome reception in a wide variety of contexts.

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The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen by Mary Poovey. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984. Pp. xxii + 287. $20.00.

Mary Poovey's *The Proper Lady and The Woman Writer* is a valuable contribution to our literary thinking in several ways. The basic assumptions of the

book are that "literature participates in ideology;" that literature involves an occasion and the "first 'occasion' of any work is its historical situation;" and that the historical situation of the writers it considers contained a contradiction between "the possibilities promised by the ideology of bourgeois individualism and the rewards possible where resources are limited and power unequally held" (241). These assumptions provide a general critical base from which Poovey develops a more historically specific perspective in which to situate the work of three women writers of a particular time and place, England in the early nineteenth-century. She delineates what bourgeois ideology there and then defined that a woman should be in order to deserve its promise of personal fulfillment and how that definition of proper femininity "contradicted the demands of professional authorship"(241) as well as the real situation of women.

Although these critical premises are hardly new to feminist critics, the result here is an informative study of selected works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen which is particularly notable in its power to blend successfully a diversity of critical methods into a unified and productive approach. Poovey's readings combine intellectual, biographical, social, and literary history, study of narrative technique, and psychological and political analyses to produce a feminist criticism which has both depth and range.

The study begins by arguing that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England various factors of social control, including economics, religion, and class, produced an image of femininity Poovey calls the Proper Lady, which was in place by the end of the eighteenth century. That image of propriety, which Poovey constructs in some detail through the evidence of conduct books, attempted at once to function as a description of the true nature of woman and as an exhortation to real women about how to feel and behave. The result was contradiction and paradox. Generally, women were to appear as pure, modest, silent, self-effacing and self-controlled. Eventually, through the backlash of the English response to the French revolution, this image of the Proper Lady would evolve into the Victorian angel in the house.

Within the shadow of this coercive and inescapable but contradictory image, real women, specifically here women writers, did find ways to satisfaction, but ways "categorized by indirection"(28). Thus, Poovey argues, "the legacy of this period is a repertoire of the strategies that enabled women either to conceive of themselves in two apparently incompatible ways or to express themselves in a code capable of being read in two ways: an acquiescence to the norm and as departure from it"(41). Wollstonecraft first identified the image and provided a critical analysis. Wollstonecraft's work represents a direct rejection of the image of proper femininity. But her writing and the details of her life also reveal her ambivalence toward the image and desire for feminine fulfillment. Mary Shelley, as a counterpoint to her family's and her own young radicalism in her first four books, turns in her last three books to a relentless conventionality which embraces the image of the proper lady, to the point in her own life of no longer being a writer, of embracing the ultimate female propriety, silence. Austen, picking neither the rebellion of Wollstonecraft nor the conformity of the older Mary Shelley, develops an aesthetic solution to the conflicting claims of personal desire and public dictate.

The literary response of all three writers to the contradictions in and the oppressiveness of their society's definition of proper femininity was to create inventive and powerful strategies of indirection which characterize their art. Poovey's sensitivity to those strategies leads to some fine insights about individual texts. I think particularly of the discussions of Wollstonecraft's critiques of Burke, Milton, and Rousseau, the comparison of the 1818 and 1831 texts of *Frankenstein*, the analysis of *The Last Man*, the analysis of the shifting narrative levels in *Persuasion*, and the continuing discussions of the social and aesthetic functions of the notion of romantic love and the related problem of depicting individual improvement as social regeneration.

The usefulness of these particular discussions, the detailed delineation of the eighteenth-century ideal of the proper lady, and the example of a complex critical method, all make *The Proper Lady and The Woman Writer* an excellent work, one which speaks to readers interested in feminist criticism, narrative theory, and the romantic period. There are, certainly, small problems. I found the section on Mary Shelley less rich than those on Wollstonecraft and Austen. The choice not to discuss *Mathilda* or *Northanger Abbey* or *Emma* seems almost random. More seriously, the structure which links the three writers—Wollstonecraft the rebel, Shelley responding by conformity, Austen the integrative resolution—seems so unhistorical, so conveniently the Hegelian thesis/antithesis/synthesis, as not only to be unconvincing but also to obscure both the real advantages of and the real problems with linking these three particular writers. Apart from the fact that Austen wrote a decade at least before Mary Shelley, there is the problem that, as Poovey herself points out and as her whole construction of the image of feminine propriety assumes, ideology is not something static, but part of the fluid dynamics of social history. Yet over the fifty productive years of the women of whom she writes, the image of proper femininity established in the first chapter is presumed to remain the same.

I have a larger reservation about the study on historical grounds. This is the question not of the consistent qualities of the ideology of the Proper Lady but of its extent. There is, finally, a real oddity in using an ideological paradigm about silencing women to explain texts from one of major outbreaks of women's multiple voices heard in our entire cultural history. The very historical period on which Poovey focuses her study of women's fictional responses to a society which defined women as self-effacing may represent the zenith of women's expression in fiction. Can a paradigm of repression adequately account for the one phase of our cultural past when women as a literary group were least repressed? Only by overlooking that very point, the point which, in terms of gender, makes that historical period so distinctive.

This is only to say that Poovey's study, for all its strengths, does not acknowledge the limitations of accounting for women writing only in the frame of an ideology of proper femininity, an acknowledgment particularly necessary given the period on which she focuses. Because there were so many women writers, the three writers considered cannot simply be presumed to be brave exceptions to the ideological norm. Nor can we understand their need to write as only personal, the individual or private response of talent to a public definition of their identity which was at worst self-negating and at best paradoxical. Given the theoretical principles which shape Poovey's argu-

ment, that ideology and historic occasion inform literature, it may be that the Proper Lady is only one ideology and that, at least for that special historical period, there may be other cultural forces, other public ideologies, which freed women to have a voice. It may be that feminine silence applied to poetry but not to prose, that public norms allowed and even encouraged women to speak out, to create themselves, in fiction. When we turn to the texts these women produced, to *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* or *Frankenstein* or *Persuasion*, we will need to build on Poovey's insights about indirect strategies of response, to allow for other cultural and personal forces at work as well.

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The Creation of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" by Michael Squires. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983. Pp. xv + 237. $22.50.

In *The Creation of "Lady Chatterley's Lover,"* Michael Squires has set himself a very ambitious task: not merely to trace the genesis of the novel but in the process to profile the way in which D. H. Lawrence's imagination operated—and all this, furthermore, with a view to explaining why *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is such a dynamic work and yet at the same times suffers from a certain dogmatism and schematization. For the greater part, Squires succeeds brilliantly, making this study one of the few to appear in recent years that definitely adds to our knowledge and appreciation of Lawrence's art. Other studies have tended to be variations on a theme—and mainly because they were theme-oriented. Here, in contrast, we have a discussion of technique by a scholar who not only understands that technique for Lawrence was a very different matter from our conventional understanding of the term but who also speaks from the authority of having examined the manuscripts, typescripts and related unpublished material involved in the "creation" of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Focusing first upon the fact that we have three complete versions of the novel, Squires emphasizes the extent to which Lawrence was an organic artist *par excellence*: not only is the form and style of his writing integrally related to his themes but Lawrence's very methods of composition are inherently suggestive of his general philosophy. That is, just as Lawrence was a firm believer in the integrity and coherence of spontaneous bursts of inspiration, and just as in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* one of Lawrence's major concerns is with breaking away from the past and the right of the individual to a fresh start which will enable him/her to realize his/her full and unique potential, so having written the first draft, instead of revising it—which would have been "to leave intact the original shape of the work"—Lawrence began again, and then having finished the second version began again yet once more. Thus as Squires sees it, "The process of renewal takes place *in* the novel and in its *method of composition*. I mean more than the critical commonplace of subject and form blending harmoniously. I mean that subject and form, and the approach to form, unite in *Lady Chatterley* preeminently" (p. 29).

If this means that each version of the novel therefore has its own autonomy, consistency and peculiar character, however, the three versions also have in common certain compositional strategies or narrative "modes." The first is the "dialogue" mode which is characterized by the "question and answer method" and involves the pitting against each other of intellectual positions. Organic to the novel's theme of education and its concern with "seekers and knowers," this mode also allows naturally for the introduction of background information and ideology. The objective of the dialogue mode is to lead to a personal revelation, the implications of which Lawrence then explores in the second or "stream of sensibility" mode. The dominant pattern of this mode Squires calls the "discovery method," which consists of a stimulus followed by a long intense lyrical flow of feeling, making this mode the technical embodiment of Lawrence's thematic concern with a non-cerebral type of consciousness. Equally organic in its own way is the third or "narrator" mode, which is characterized by the "loop method." For here Lawrence's practice is to begin with a central term, to expand and explore its dimensions but ultimately to circle back, creating thereby a sense of enclosure which is in keeping with the novel's major thematic concern with the need for refuge or psychological harbors.

As a "closed" mode, this third narrative strategy stands in contrast to the "open" character of the dialogue and stream of sensibility modes, just as with its concern with "external" issues the dialogue mode balances the "internal" quality of the stream mode. Similarly, within each of the three modes themselves there is this same kind of polarity—Lawrence's procedure being to progress by any way of repetition and variation—and, of course, the novel is throughout thematically pervaded with contrasts and conflicts: nature/civilization, mind/body, upper/lower classes. The major conclusion Squires comes to, therefore, is that if one of the key features of Lawrence's imagination was its inspired and spontaneous quality, the other was his tendency to think in terms of "binary opposites," and both the virtues and the flaws of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* require to be understood in this context.

Functioning at its best, Lawrence's imagination would begin with a flurry of ideas which immediately were conditioned by certain habits of thought, taking the form of the three narrative modes. At the same time that they channeled his ideas, however, these modes also led to new insights and perception of what it was he was articulating, whereby they also determined the direction of the novel. So that for Lawrence, instead of technique being a means of objectifying content, "technique *is* discovery" and a "heuristic for revealing content" (p. 140). But by the same token, when Lawrence's creative energy lessened as a result of increasing ill health, the very formula that had led to success led in numerous instances to failure; because he began to rely too routinely on the techniques that had served him so well, these techniques came "to control the material he invented" (p. 21), and so instead of classical symmetry and polarity we begin to get schematization and polarization. A related factor was his increasing self-consciousness about how his phallic novel would be received, a defensiveness which prompted him to resort too much to the narrator mode and to use this mode too much as a vehicle for polemics.

This brief summary can not, of course, exhaust the scope of Squires' study,

which also provides, for example, a lengthy discussion of how the characters changed from version to version—partly as a result of Lawrence's "discovery" of their motives and partly in accordance with changes in Lawrence's own marital situation. Nor is it possible here to do anything but attest to the depth of Squires' study or the wealth of concrete examples that he provides to support his contentions. Yet in apologizing in this way, I also come to the first of a number of weaknesses of *The Creation of "Lady Chatterley's Lover,"* namely Squires' own misguided desire to be exhaustive.

Beginning and ending the body of his text, for example, is "A Narrative" in which he respectively traces the biographical/historical facts and events surrounding Lawrence's writing of the novel and then the "Fate of the Novel" or its publication history up to the advent of the forthcoming Cambridge edition. Except for enabling Squires to claim that he has produced a "definitive" study, as it were, this material serves no real purpose, for there is little here that will be new to the Lawrence scholar, and those facts which are important for his interpretation are repeated at appropriate places within the course of his discussion. What may be "new" is the Appendix in which he reproduces "Lawrence's Financial Notebook for the Novel," but how this has any bearing on our understanding of Lawrence's imagination escapes me.

Padded in this way, the book is also extremely repetitive. Each chapter tends to begin with a lengthy statement of what he intends to do, and throughout the entire study there are endless instances of pointless generalizations, recapitulations and introduction of material "to be discussed later." Equally sophomoric are the numerous examples of gratuitous cross-referencing of Lawrence's practice with that of other novelists: "His methods of composition resemble Thackeray's rather than the more typical methods of Dickens, George Eliot, Hardy, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner, or Dostoevsky" (pp. 19–20). And one must also put up with such poetic flairs as their description of Connie: "Like a sailboat anchored in a gale, she is held fast by stale convention, racked by the wings of sexual desire until the anchor rope breaks" (p. 24).

Many readers, too, will be put off by the arrogant tone of the book, with Squires continually reminding us that what he is doing has "never been done before," just as he is singularly ungracious in dealing with critics who have interpreted the novel without the advantage of the material that he has at his disposal. Thus after criticizing Moynahan for seeing Mellors' ideas as immature, he goes on: "These ideas become clear only when one knows how they existed in their original, unrevised form" (p. 184). Or again, "In ways like this, the novel's textual history can be surprisingly helpful, calling into question judgments like Kate Millett's that Mellors "despises his own class" (p. 244). The manuscript shows that far from being the bitter misanthrope critics have found, Mellors loves his fellow man; he "cares deeply for the *life* of others" (p. 185).

Actually, what is really evident here is the basic flaw in Squires' own approach: his reconstruction of the "true" nature of the characters on the basis of the collated versions and his subsequent practice of treating them as if they had an existence independent of the texts. Thus in another instance we read: "Because Clifford is unable to bridge oppositions and therefore lacks internal tension, Lawrence failed to create him whole" (p. 175). To much the

same effect, having devised the real import of the *Lady Chatterley* material, Squires then starts criticizing Lawrence on this basis, arguing for example that the final version is flawed by "Lawrence's inability to understand the relationship of his story of Connie and the keeper to the ideas set forth in *A Propos. . .*" (p. 182). Nor, accordingly, is he beyond prescribing that "the ending might have been enhanced if Connie and Mellors had committed themselves to some politically useful work" (p. 185).

A final criticism of the book that needs to be registered is the extent to which Squires exaggerates his own innovativeness through his handling of Lawrence scholarship. Thus at the outset, in a typical trotting out of names, he contrasts his generic and technique-oriented approach with that of such message-oriented critics as "Mark Schorer, Scott Sanders, Kingsley Widmer, and Emile Delaveny. . . . Graham Hough, Julian Moynahan, H. M. Daleski and Michael Black" (p. 21), and it is not until far into his study, and there not even brought into the text but tucked away into an end-note (p. 229, n. 2), that he makes a token reference to the studies which are most recent and relevant to his own concerns and approach.

Overall, therefore, while *The Creation of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"* is masterful in its core insights, Michael Squires is also a bit immature in his presentation of his findings. One would be tempted to say that he picked up his bad habits from Lawrence were it not that Squires himself has demonstrated that Lawrence was not only brilliant but also self-disciplined and responsible.

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Faulkner's Rhetoric of Loss: A Study in Perception and Meaning by Gail L. Mortimer. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983. Pp. xi + 153. $17.90.

The intent of Gail L. Mortimer's new study of Faulkner is "to elucidate a cluster of structural idiosyncrasies in [his] descriptive passages in ways that enable us to speak profitably of a more encompassing 'perceptual style' informing his prose" (1). To this end, the book is organized around analyses of several recurring themes and rhetorical strategies in Faulkner's major works: "Identity and the Spatial Imagination," "Precarious Coherence: Objects through Time," "Significant Absences," and "'The Terror of History': Faulkner's Solution." Within each of these chapters, Mortimer works to demonstrate the "unity of meaning" that exists among the various techniques that characterize Faulkner's descriptions of his narrators and protagonists.

Mortimer begins with the assumption that individuals' perceptions "will express a particular way of being in the world. How they focus, select, and interpret reality is biased and guided by personal styles or personal myths" (1). Identifying her point of departure in psychoanalytic conceptions of identity, specifically, object relations theory, she focuses on its account of the child's discovery and response to his or her separateness from the world. This first experience of loss, coeval with the discovery of time, initiates the formation of individual identity; it also provokes us to become "symbol-making creatures" and to begin constructing the "transitional objects" that

same mystified source that Faulkner exposes: the binary systems that authorize social orders and the individual's relation to them. To identify the mutually-dependent functions of the binary as "paradoxical" may be to participate in a further mystification of the cultural power structures that Faulkner himself sought to question.

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