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Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory by Frank Whigham. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. Pp. xiii + 257, 2 figures. $27.00.

Although More's *Utopia* has no place in Frank Whigham's discussion of the view of society articulated in courtesy literature, Raphael Hythloday's condemnation of the "conspiracy of the rich, who pursue their own aggrandizement under the name and title of the Commonwealth" comes close to the thesis argued in this singleminded study. As Whigham sees it, the literature of courtesy served an ideological function, to ascribe privilege, to channel ambition, and to maintain the fiction of a status quo in a society menaced by social advancement and increasing social mobility, a situation Whigham is fond of calling "convection." "The motor of life at court was the pursuit of power and privilege" (p. 20), Whigham writes, and courtesy literature provided (in Kenneth Burke's terms) "equipment for living," a coding of the rhetorical tropes that governed the "scramble" for place and power. According to Whigham, life at court offered the paranoid existence of a theatricality played in a hall of mirrors, an infinite regress in which one was never secure from others' eyes, or sure in one's actions or interpretations of others' behavior—or one's own. In such a "hothouse," Whigham argues, courtesy literature provided a set of strategies for "image management" (style is all) governed by a trope Whigham borrows from Puttenham, *paradiastole*, making the best of a bad thing, a trope of mystification that, on the one hand, bends all actions to one's benefits and, on the other, abuses the similar actions of rivals and enemies. "Personal promotion" and "personal rivalry" are the end products of the view that Whigham offers in the final hundred pages of his book, after setting the scene with a discussion of the social matrix of a (limited) class warfare, its rhetorical embodiment in texts like Castiglione or Elyot, and its overriding view of a hierarchical world of privilege to be maintained and manipulated. Hythloday might speak here, reviling courts "made up of those who envy all others and admire themselves," a society in which "every man gets as much as he can for himself by one device or another." These devices are Whigham's "tropes" of social mystification and dissimulation in the service of self-promotion.

As Whigham admits, the view he offers grows out of work done in the past few years that has countered the Burkhardtian view of the artifice of self-construction ("the perfecting of the individual") with a more finely tuned awareness of the politics of self-fashioning. Against an idealizing tradition, however, Whigham offers an opposing view equally extreme in its sourness and debunking. If once courts were regarded as the flowering of aristocratic leisure, for Whigham they are places of the most intense work, governed by the rigors of combative competition, plagued by anxieties, motivated by an overwhelming and inescapable bad faith. Ideology, as Raymond Williams has written, is capable of many interpretations; Whigham espouses the hard line in which the only face ideology wears is a false one, the only consciousness false consciousness. The court, he tells his readers, plays a confidence game.

In this view, the only "substance" of court life is its manufacturing and commodification of a style, the securing for oneself of the privilege and power that comes from being a member of the ruling class. That the court was the center for the administration of justice, or the negotiation of international relationships, or of any substantial business, is simply discounted; that figures like More or Cromwell or Burghley had more on their minds than self-aggrandizement is never considered; the court's sole concern was, in Whigham's view, the mystification of its own power. This is to take absolutely literally the rhetoric of court life and thus to be mystified by the texts that obscured the real business of the court (In Whigham's view, it seems, one only goes to parties to make contacts, or engages in conversations to score points.). The argument, in short, is insular and narrow, and however much it penetrates the rhetoric of advancement, it cannot sustain the totalization at which Whigham aims. "Since the symbolic functions we have examined could use any substantive actions as a vehicle," Whigham concludes—pointing, as he repeatedly does, to the transformation of any substantive into a symbolic channel of the ambition for privilege, "our field of view might finally extend to encompass all of human action" (p. 184), if, one might add, all human actions were motivated solely by greed, ambition, envy, and the like, if the only purpose of power was its own display.

One need not fall back on naive or sentimental views of human motivation to feel that Whigham's views are excessively narrow and nasty. One might, for instance, counter Whigham's argument with those of Thomas Greene on Castiglione or Louis Montrose on Puttenham. In a 1979 essay, "*Il Cortegiano* and the Choice of a Game," recently collected by Robert Hanning and David Rosand in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture* (1983), Greene also sees the tenuousness of court existence, the tensions of a tightrope walk; but, unlike Whigham, he is alive to a full play of social inflections. Whigham's paradiastolic view claims at best to be alert to duplicities; in fact, it is a rhetoric that relentlessly sees all surfaces as manipulations and offers these surfaces as their full substance. That such play might be knowing play, or that it might be on the margins of power not so encoded, are merely two of a number of alternatives that Whigham never entertains. His literalism takes the form of a total distrust; everything must mean something else, and that something else must be mean-spirited. Although Puttenham's courtly figure of Allegoria is, predictably, Whigham's refuge for this view, Whigham's Puttenham exists in a "repressive absolutist climate" (p. 186) that sounds more like Stalin's Russia than Elizabeth's England. Unlike Montrose, Whigham is not concerned with an exactness of social matrices. He takes the broad view of a society in transition, and offers his texts (for the most part Italian and produced for smallscale courts) as a single textbook for the English court, contextless and seamless. "I propose to homogenize the conceptual materials of courteous practice . . . by arguing that most of the major texts were *formally* pliant to incremental use in social debate and self-presentation . . . . I conceive Renaissance courtesy theory . . . as a corpus of strategies that is coherent as practice even though discontinuous among its textualizations. . . . We must expect frequent citations out of context . . ." (p. 27). Thus, unlike the new historicists to whom he claims allegiance, Whigham (unlike Greenblatt or Montrose) is not alive to the particularities of

social context. His are master tropes without a history. What worked in aristocratic Urbino worked in Elizabethan London.

In fact, the theoretical model for Whigham—as the repeated invocation of Goffman or Burke indicates—is sociological. Social theory and society are treated as one and the same—as if Castiglione transcribed scenes of life at Urbino that were replayed at the court of Elizabeth, a view that is false on two counts at least. Occasionally, as in pondering over the list of New Year's gifts or the sumptuary codes, Whigham does manage a convincing glimpse at court practice. More often, a sleight of hand accomplishes the move from texts to court life. Thus, arguing that social difference was mystified as a difference in kind and not merely in degree, Whigham cites "the biological version of this trope, to speak literally of leaping" (p. 71), quoting a text about miscegenation that he then assumes is applicable to the ambitions of "malapert assheads" (a tag from Castiglione quoted with frequent relish). Or, assigning the name *cosmesis* to the trope that camouflages vulnerability, he proceeds to discuss the "class of female whipping boys" (p. 116) lambasted for the use of makeup. Such doubtful procedures are repeated in these decontextualized readings bent on systematization; transitions creak with the machinery of totalization. And often the theorization of texts is so weighted by sociological jargon as to accomplish its own mystifications. Stripping texts of their highminded pretenses they are then clothed in the seeming highmindedness of sociological abstractions, part of the book's attempt to wear the mantle of theoretical power and total penetration. There is no *sprezzatura* here, however, and the text of *Ambition and Privilege* can be heavy going indeed, not least for its monological repetitiousness and its jargon, but most in succeeding all too well in its attempt "to reclaim the banal" (p. 185). As perhaps some of the quotations suggest already, Whigham's style can also be accused of being content, fancy talk obscuring precise analysis. Here, for instance, is a view of social "convection": "But what should be stressed at this point is that many of these tactics, or many of their uses, were finally self-defeating, since they were aimed at making possible one social action (of the speaker) while refrigerating the frame against further convection by others" (p. 25). Here, for another instance, is a view of social stratification: "The lamination of these concentric circles and of the interrupted continuum of noble and ignoble has several strategic effects" (p. 71).

Yet, despite the pretension of its writing and the narrowness of its views, *Ambition and Privilege* offers a partial account that is worth having as a corrective to the idealizing of courtesy texts, or to their dismissal as subliterary. Whigham is surely correct in demanding that these texts be reclaimed as an important articulation of Renaissance social theory. They now require placement in a more fully realized social and historical context; equally, they need to be seen against other literary depictions of court life. These goals are announced in Whigham's "Afterword," and one can hope that his next book will escape the limits of *Ambition and Privilege*.

Brown University Jonathan Goldberg

Love Known: Theology and Experience in George Herbert's Poetry by Richard Strier. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983. Pp. xxi + 277. $22.00.

Anyone with a professional interest in George Herbert should read *Love Known*. Almost all the poems in "The Church" acquire clarity and purpose as a result of the reformation context provided here. Strier's readings demonstrate beyond dispute that justification by faith is a definitive assumption, probably the definitive religious assumption, underlying *The Temple*. This "extraordinarily rich and powerful theological doctrine," Strier explains, "means to transform the religious consciousness. . . . It demands a central and commanding role; all other doctrines and positions must derive their energy from it" (p. xii). For an explanation of the doctrine, Strier relies primarily on Luther, not only because "*Anyone* who emphasizes justification by faith with theological clarity and lyrical intensity will sound like Luther" (p. xiii), but also because "Herbert's position *is* Luther's—that is the sum and substance of my argument" (p. xiv). Again and again Strier's readings show that Herbert's poetry was—like his faith—more personal, more experiential, more emotional, more inward, more unpredictable, than it once seemed.

Strier's style is graciously irenic, and his argument gathers its force from links between the poetry and the theology, not from disagreements with other critics. Nonetheless, his reformation view of *The Temple* is the culmination of a major revolution in Herbert studies. From the mid seventeenth century when Izaak Walton wrote the *Life of Herbert* until very recently, most readers have assumed George Herbert was a high Anglican, committed to the order and beauty of a ceremonious orthodoxy, and indebted (as Tuve and Martz argued) to conventional Catholic poetry and meditation. After reading *Love Known*, and discovering Herbert's commitment to the inward and spiritual faith of the early reformers and their more radical followers, one can no longer take Herbert's "high Anglicanism" for granted. Indeed, the very term is an anachronism.

Strier is immensely erudite—the bibliography alone will be a great resource for future scholars of seventeenth-century religious literature. Yet *Love Known* is not dominated by scholarly documentation. Each chapter begins with one facet of the central thesis—explained in two or three pages. The body of the chapter applies the doctrine to a substantial group of poems. Strier has admirably decided to analyse whole poems and to avoid selective quotation; that makes his particular readings truly probing and his larger conclusions deservedly authoritative. Once in a while Strier sounds dismissive, but even if "'The Discharge' does not constitute a theologically relevant piece" (p. 115), Strier provides impressively detailed and thorough analyses of about 130 of Herbert's 164 poems.

Although the issues are highly complex and the sources often opaque, Strier explains justification by faith and a host of related beliefs lucidly and concisely. We learn, for example: "Grace alone made salvation possible. . . . Man could not claim for himself ever so little without claiming too much" (p. 2); "a Christian man is both righteous and a sinner [simul justus et peccator] (p. 16); "Nothing in man is free of sin" (p. 29); "the intellect profanes religion" (p. 44); "Faith and reason are inimical and directly opposed"

(p. 46); "Man is saved by ceasing from (intellectual) effort, which can only damn him" (p. 47); "Human insufficiency was only half of it. What made the gospel truly good news was the other half; the doctrine of grace" (p. 66); "the doctrine of the irresistibility of grace" is "easily misrepresented. It seems to involve a violation of the human personality, a conception of God as an impersonal force. . . . But Herbert always conceived of God as a figure with whom genuine relationship was possible, a true 'thou.'" (pp. 82–83). With the majority of Herbert's poems these basic assumptions of the reformation prove enormously clarifying. Realizing, for example, that Herbert rejects all efforts to merit God's grace helps explain why so many of Herbert's poems end on a note of joyous submission; although to us transcendence of the self and dependence on God might seem like a stymied defeat, for Herbert they are a triumphant discovery of loving faith.

In order not to burden the poems with theology, Strier relegates the fine points and much of the documentation to footnotes. Most readers will be grateful that Strier keeps his eye closely focused on the poems, but at times I could not help wishing for more explanation and less notation. For example, in discussing the "motives involved in the creation of elaborate art," Strier says, "Calvin's remarks on the connections between pride and 'love of strife' are perhaps relevant here" (p. 180). But instead of explaining Calvin's position and determining whether or not it is relevant, the footnote simply refers us to the *Institutes* III.vii.4. "Ultimately, my commitment is to the illumination of the poetry" (p. xi), Strier explains, which is, of course, what it should be.

Some potential readers may be discouraged by Strier's theological focus, but they should not be, for the greatest attraction of this book is that it makes Herbert's poems so appealingly human. Luther's attack on reason and his emphasis on "the special status of emotion in the relationship between man and God" (p. 174) yield poetry that is less abstractly intellectual or rational and more personal, more experiential, above all, more full of feeling. Confronted with the abstract language that begins "The Bunch of Grapes"—"Joy, I did lock thee up: but some bad man/Hath let thee out again"—Strier observes that the speaker "addresses this abstraction in a comically exasperated tone, as if it were a wayward child or stray cat" (p. 155). A stray cat—that's wonderful. For the reformation divines, faith is inseparable from experience. Even at the moment when reason yields to faith, and the speaker yields to God, Strier describes the change as a heart-felt human experience. He sees the end of "The Collar," for example, not as a requisite and disappointing capitulation to piety but as a "spontaneous" response to love: "This spontaneity is the true vision of freedom in the poem" (p. 277). For Herbert (as Strier shows) even sin is a familiar feeling in the gut: "The speaker's soul draws back in 'Love' (III) merely and precisely because he is human—and therefore conscious of being so, and therefore 'guiltie'" (p. 74). Because Strier believes "what God demands from the regenerate is not seemliness but sincerity" (p. 177), he also stresses the irreverence of Herbert's language. Thus when we find Herbert "expressing what could legitimately be called humility," Strier looks beneath the surface piety, and concludes that "Herbert has a strong sense of the arrogance implicit in this humility" (p. 80).

Strier is at his very best when describing the complex emotional coloring of Herbert's poems. He tells us, for example, that the opening of "Assurance" is

"exclamatory, almost sputtering, as if Herbert were trying to banish the thought by execrating it, calling it names." Elsewhere he calls our attention to "the note of cavilling" (p. 77), the "comic vigour" (p. 68) the "geniality of the speaker's self mockery" (p. 67). Probably because he understands the religious issues so fully, Strier can say with confidence when something is a "simple, sober, and impressive assertion" (p. 89) and when it is "a joke" (p. 167); when "the lines are so obviously sophistical as to be playful" (p. 94), when the "geniality of the speaker's self-mockery leaves no doubt about the happy ending" (p. 67), and when Herbert is speaking "feelingly and seriously, like a man that is past jest" (p. 176). Although one might think that so much comedy would undermine Herbert's religious purpose, one of Strier's main goals is to demonstrate just how light-hearted and joyous early seventeenth-century protestantism was; thus he reminds us, "the significance of these lines. . . . is in their gaiety and wit, their attitudinal rather than their conceptual content" (p. 113). Indeed Strier provides perhaps the richest account yet of the interplay between sincerity and humor in "The Church." Nor is Strier deaf to the wide variety of poetic and rhetorical effects in "The Church": he notes when "the singsong of the meter reinforces the smug and proverbial effect, as does the ostentatiously balanced construction" (p. 98). Strier's fine sense of tone and wit prove that "The more deeply we understand the theology of the poetry, the more deeply we understand its human content. The two are one" (p. xxi). That finally is what Strier claims and demonstrates most feelingly, and it explains why so many early seventeenth-century religious poets wrote not simply great religious poems but great poems.

Strier's argument suggests, although he is too tactful to say so directly, that one must understand the religious context in order to explain Herbert's poems: "A purely 'internal' reading of the poems can show that they have certain shapes or emphases but cannot show why. The poems can be explicated without truly being rendered intelligible" (p. xi). Even when we set out to discuss Herbert's poetry "as poetry," Strier shows that we are always making assumptions, however inadvertently, about Herbert's beliefs. Thus where critics operating under modernist assumptions (including modern religious assumptions) see weakness, Strier, applying the doctrine of justification, finds religious strength. Where critics have found religious piety or psychological strength, Strier sees misguided efforts to merit God's grace. Where they see narrative collapse and a loss of ego, Strier discovers spiritual progress and a much sought for transcendence of the self.

Love Known is bound to meet some resistance because it insists on the religious context. If one has been reading Herbert for years, one might not want to hear that the morass of Reformation theology has suddenly become required reading. It is not simply that the literature of religious controversy is difficult to read, or even read about; Luther and Calvin are not much less accessible than Pindar, and few of us, regardless of critical methodology, would dismiss a classical scholar who highlights and explains previously overlooked or misunderstood details in Renaissance odes. But when the field of inquiry changes from the classical literature of Greece and Rome to the controversial literature of the Reformation, and a critic like Strier suggests that Herbert includes this or that puzzling detail not because literary convention required it,

but because his God required it, proffered scholarly information can easily seem, not illuminating, but "extrinsic" or unwelcome. Even today, most critics of *The Temple* operate under strong beliefs. Anglicans and Roman Catholics who cherish the beauty of a ceremonious orthodoxy may dislike the low "Church" Strier offers instead. Atheists, agnostics, and deconstructionists who cherish doubt and provisionality may also dislike the doctrinal clarifications Strier provides, though for very different reasons. To benefit from *Love Known* one must be willing to accept the religious context of the reformation, not as the final explanation of Herbert's poetry, nor the end of literary pluralism, but as one crucial key to interpretation.

Since, as Strier acknowledges, the "readings provide the primary (though not exclusive) evidence for the theses, while the theses guide the readings" (p. xi), critics will undoubtedly question both the readings and the theses, or at least some of them, as I would. But rather than arguing over poems, for other readers would surely question my interpretations in turn, I would rather suggest some ways in which Strier might have buttressed his argument, or used his basic premises to reach somewhat different conclusions.

First of all, Strier's argument must rest on his readings because he does not have any substantial, extrinsic evidence of Herbert's beliefs. Compelling evidence of Herbert's concern with the justification by faith can be found, however, by applying Herbert's notes and letter about Valdesso's *Considerations* to the *Considerations* itself. Strier's extensive bibliography omits the *Considerations*, although like *Love Known*, it is devoted to the question of justification by faith. In chapters 1–5 Strier turns to Luther and his early Reformation followers (including Calvin, but only when he echoes Luther.) Strier then turns in chapters 6–8 to more radical Puritans whose writings often appeared after Herbert's death and who emphasized the inwardness and spirituality that Strier finds in Herbert's poetry. I think these less successful final chapters would have been stronger if Strier had consulted not the radicals but Calvin, because as Barbara Lewalski correctly asserts, and Strier acknowledges, Herbert, like most members of the British Church, was a "Calvinist in theology" (*Protestant Poetics*, p. 286).

Though extremely illuminating, Strier's Lutheran model does not fully explain some important aspects of Herbert's poetry and belief, not only matters like Herbert's sacramentalism which Strier describes as Calvinist and consciously omits, but also the very doctrines that Strier emphasizes: regeneration, the Holy Spirit, Revelation, and reason. While Strier separates these issues, Calvin offers a simple paradigm which connects them in time; after an initial experience of faith, regeneration begins, and slowly (though not completely until the Last Judgment) the individual's fallen human reason is corrected by revelation of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 5, "The New Life: Conversion," Strier describes regeneration as "primarily cognitive and epistemological, an experience of knowing and seeing" (p. 133). Strier himself recognizes that his account of regeneration is unsatisfactorily abstract: "It would be odd if the poet who found those 'demonstrations' most evident and clear that fetched their proofs 'ev'n from the very bone' should not have left in his poetry some direct account of his own conversion" (p. 133). Strier finds one "direct account" of regeneration in "The Glance," which is indeed more emotional and personal. It is nonetheless a "report" of a long-past event, or

rather "a credo as a report" (p. 137). Given the great importance that the Reformation (and Strier) places on direct personal experience, one would expect Herbert to provide more immediate and dramatic accounts of the most personal and crucial of all religious experiences—the errors of natural man, the transforming experience of regeneration, and the slow process of sanctification. This is, I believe, precisely what Herbert arranged the poems in "The Church" to dramatize. Strier argues that the speaker is of course a regenerate Christian throughout, but several poems at the beginning of "The Church" suggest that the speaker is still unregenerate. Strier argues that the speaker's complaints about his hard heart are themselves a sign of grace, but they could also be a preparation for grace, as Norman Pettit explains in *The Heart Prepared*. I believe that many of the opening poems like "Nature," in which the speaker explicitly begs God to make him "new," are designed to show that the speaker is not yet reborn. In fact, Strier provides (without recognizing) compelling evidence that at the outset of "The Church" the speaker is chosen but not reborn; an extraordinary number of the poems which Strier cites to illustrate the speaker's fallen reason and misdirected efforts to merit grace occur at the beginnning of "The Church." It is not until the poem entitled "Faith" that the speaker has his first revelation of regenerate reason: "Faith did change the scene: / And then appear'd a glorious skie." In the next poem, "Repentance," the transforming experience of faith leads—as reformation doctrine and Strier both say it should—to the first real experience of repentance in "The Church."

Indeed, there is a much tighter connection between "2. The Attack on Reason," "8. The Limits of Experience," and "5. The New Life" than Strier explains. The separation of these issues produces what is probably the major omission in Strier's overall argument: the order of poems in "The Church." When it suits his purpose, Strier ties his readings of individual poems to the immediate context, but he ignores the organization of "The Church" as a whole because his goal is to explain—but not to trace the development of—Herbert's faith. Consequently, he devotes much of his attention to the "series of powerful and theologically explicit poems written after the compilation of the 'W' manuscript" (p. 95). Perhaps sensing this lopsidedness, the final chapter, "The Limits of Experience," considers those "moments of negative feeling" when "faith relies on the evidence of something not seen or (immediately) felt" (p. 219). This chapter provides an important corrective, but it neither acknowledges the scope of the problem, nor accounts for the large number of poems where the speaker, plagued by spiritual doubt, seeking faith he does not yet have, makes one blunder after another.

Finally I question chapter 6, "The Heart Alone: Inwardness and Individualism," which argues that Herbert, like the radical Puritans, rejected artful language, along with outward ceremony, because he trusted *solely* in "the inward testimony of the Spirit." First let me say that Strier makes an absolutely compelling case that "the inward testimony of the Spirit" (p. 144) provides a "historical and religious *validation* of Herbert's concern with his own experience" (p. 156). After the opening remarks, however, Strier says little more about the Spirit in chapter 6, and that is unfortunate because, as Calvin's theology and Lewalski's Protestant poetics explain, a Protestant poet who believed deeply in the spirit would probably also have believed that oc-

casionally the spirit inspired his poems. Having demonstrated throughout that man's effort to worship God in prayer and poem is always imperfect, Strier concludes in "A true Hymne" that "God's writing *Loved* has nothing to do with poetry. Herbert is not in any way claiming that God actually wrote the final word of his poem" (p. 205). I would argue that Herbert meant this quite literally: in discovering that "God writeth, *Loved*," Herbert once again learns that he can and must rely *solely* on the Holy Spirit, precisely because his own love and art are so imperfect. Thanks to the Spirit, inspiration occurs not only in Herbert's heart but also in his poems, which are often a revelation for the poet as well as the reader.

Some critics may be tempted to dismiss Strier's argument because they disagree with particular poetic or doctrinal interpretations. That would be a great mistake, and a great loss. I have also disagreed with some aspects of Strier's argument but only to further the debate he begins so soundly, not to question the basic premises of *Love Known*. Strier has proven beyond a doubt that Herbert's poetry is imbued with and greatly illuminated by the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. If we are tempted to construe either Herbert's poems or Reformation doctrines somewhat differently, that simply shows that *The Temple* captures the spirit of the Reformation—for, we must remember, theology and worship were more hotly contested and widely debated during the Reformation than literary theory is today. Clarifying Herbert's Reformation sympathies, and recognizing his commitment to the direct personal experience of faith, is the beginning not the end of interpretation. Strier's gracious concluding words serve as a model for us all: "I have tried to do some 'nailing down' in this study, but I hope I have provided a floor or a road rather than a wall" (p. 245). Thanks to *Love Known* the road is now much more clearly marked; the twists and turns remain to challenge future scholars, who will undoubtedly argue for years to come over details—of faith and language.

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The Sacred Complex: On the Psychogenesis of "Paradise Lost" by William Kerrigan. Cambridge, Massachsetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1983. Pp. x + 344. $25.00.

A book subtitled *On the Psychogenesis of "Paradise Lost"* courts in advance something like Andrew Marvell's apprehension lest Milton himself might "ruin . . . /The sacred Truths to Fable and old Song." But not, it turns out, to worry: there are no ruinous reductions here. Informed by remarkable intelligence and breadth of learning, William Kerrigan's study could, in fact, be characterized as an attack on the reductiveness of most literary criticism, traditional and modern.

In Kerrigan's view, traditional historical criticism shares with psychoanalytic criticism the impulse to force great texts into narrow structures of meaning —in the first instance the commonplaces of an historical era and, in the second, the archaic patterns of an author's (or reader's) mind. But psychoanaly-

sis, he maintains, offers an opportunity not available elsewhere, an opportunity to break free from closed systems of interpretation. With Paul Ricoeur as a principle guide and inspiration, Kerrigan wishes to avoid a psychoanalytic discourse restricted to a concern with the text as fantasy—a concern which, like historical criticism, confines meaning to a past. Rather, by respecting "the cultural life of symbols" he would "generate a narrative of the creative act oriented toward its 'second life' as a source of our pleasure and our wisdom." He wishes (in Ricoeur's terms) "to capture meaning in its flight from 'the space of fantasy' to the 'space of culture'" (p. 4).

More specifically, Kerrigan finds in the symbolism of "Miltonic Christianity" an occasion to reconsider psychoanalytic theory, the principles of which have not, in his view, been adequately "thematized" (p. 5). It is the theory of the superego which Kerrigan places centrally at risk by submitting it "to the intelligence and sublimity of Milton's faith" (p. 6)—a faith expressed in a theology and art fundamentally oedipal in character: "I would like to recover something of the original urgency of the encounter between religion and psychoanalysis. If psychoanalysis would guard us against the primitive illusions of religion, perhaps religious affirmations of the superego would guard us against the civilized [post-Freudian] illusions of a self-authenticating ego" (pp. 7–8). One could question the fortuitousness of Kerrigan's discovery, in his subject, a corrective to the deficiencies of his method, but what in fact emerges from the speculative "encounter" he undertakes is exciting enough to justify far less secure procedures. A psychoanalytic study of Milton is right for our moment, and we are fortunate to have had Kerrigan to undertake it.

At the center of Kerrigan's presentation of Milton's achievement—psychological and artistic—and at the center of his revised sense of the superego is the idea of the sacred complex, a reinactment of "the oedipus complex in the sphere of religion" (p. 77) which is different from the repetitions which make the "religious element in some lives . . . [appear] to be reducible without much leftover to early psychic arrangements" (p. 73). The sense of God achieved in this "mature fulfillment of the complex" (p. 73) is not fixed, not based on repetition. The God of the sacred complex has not become equivalent to the demands of the prevailing culture. Rather, this is a more primitive God, a God recovered from an original search:

> . . . if the searching child has attached the Name-of-God, with a reverence indistinct from fear and trembling, to the father at the threshold of the superego, an unpredictable figure of pure power whose authority stands prior to any apprehension of law as such, religious devotion may permit a creative "immaturing" of the fallen superego [the superego become vehicle of culture]. One may regain through such a voluntarist God eccentric possibilities obscured by the evolution of the superego, and if society is to some degree tolerant of these possibilities, a dimension of the indefinite, of radical futurity, may appear in the cultural order. (p. 77)

In Kerrigan's reading of Milton's works, the perfected hero of this sacred superego is the Christ of *Paradise Regained* (a psychological portrait of the mature Milton) whose extraordinary strength and ability await, unmoved;

"eccentric possibility" derives from his absolute submission to a "voluntarist God" who liberates the sacred hero from the satanically voiced demands of a culture opposed to "radical futurity."

In the psychobiography Kerrigan presents, *Paradise Regained* stands last. In the design of his study, it is paired at the outset with *Comus* to suggest the psychological distance Milton traversed from a young manhood in which virginity was "the intimate core of . . . [his] poetic identity" (p. 53) to a wholly transformed maturity. Having established these termini—the tempted lady and the tempted Christ—Kerrigan turns to *Paradise Lost*, his principle concern and, for him, the occasion of Milton's great self-transformation. "How did he do it?" is Kerrigan's initial question, and, with the idea of the sacred complex as context, blindness is the fundamental answer. Blindness was Milton enabling circumstance, "a sign in need of meaning and a meaning in need of interpretation, both of which Milton created by first submitting to the significance of this sign already created in his unconscious" (p. 135).

Kerrigan approaches this significance in complicated ways which do not lend themselves easily to brief summary. An extended discussion of first creation (Milton's "first born . . . unapproached Light") leads to a consideration of origins as they appear in the "Freudian melodrama" of the primal scene—the scene of which Milton is, Kerrigan rightly maintains, "*the* poet" (p. 162). As the act of seeing, in this "space of sexual desire," is associated with guilt, blindness ultimately becomes an enabling prior punishment for the poet who seeks to "see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight," to witness his and our first parents "Imparadis't in one another's arms." Milton's account was settled: "he had paid the penalty [for the ambition of his epic] before commiting the crime" (p. 190). As a real circumstance, blindness was also enabling in forcing in Milton a psychological regression, the creative "immaturing" Kerrigan posits as a component of the sacred complex. Creating a child-like dependency on the ministrations of others, "blindness gave him a new claim on the image of the early mother; he found the evidence of her presence in dreams [the nightly visitations of a feminine muse] that permitted him to see and to wander, becoming strong in the weakness of the child" (p. 190). As castration, blindness produces in Milton not only a sense of debt repayed but also the feminine receptivity of the "darkling" bird who "Tunes her noctural Note" (it is Satan who expells the woman in himself); and apposite to the emergence of the feminine, it is blindness which creates the void, the "Universal blanc," that *Paradise Lost* must fill. Detached from the richness of Kerrigan's full argument, such observations may seem very vulnerable, perhaps offensive. As they appear, however, in the context of a passionate engagement with Milton's poetry, they offer, at worst, an exciting challenge to our view of Milton and our conceptions of the creative process.

Kerrigan's sense of Milton's achievement faces a crisis in his final chapter on *Paradise Lost*. Here he presents a version of the dissatisfaction many have felt with the last two books of the epic. Prior to these books, Kerrigan has found consistent evidence of psychological advancement, of a religious synthesis which both expresses Milton's psychic history and frees him from mechanistic repetitions of this past. Such a liberating synthesis should, to his mind, confer a sense of positive value on the ways of men, but in the final book of Milton's epic an oppressively negative view of human history as the

stage of futile repetition throws the weight of Milton's argument for God's justice on a blissful, apocalyptic end—a religious disposition Kerrigan characterizes as "another of the poisons that taint this life" (p. 280). This failure on Milton's part, this temporary inability to do more than "idolize" the first paradise by binding oneself to the desire for its return, is at last, Kerrigan thinks, overcome: "To prevent the third paradise [heaven] from becoming a defensive idol, our mortal state in the second paradise [the promised "paradise within"] must be chosen without reference to the happy end" (p. 285). And so, in Kerrigan's reading of the epic's "uncanny" final lines, it is. Unlike Satan, "bound absolutely to a trauma in the past" (p. 288), fallen Adam and Eve create, by choosing the interior paradise, "an expiatory symbol" (p. 284) which is authentic and liberating:

> Authentic symbols begin in undenied catastrophe, making absence present not that desire may be bound to an indestructible wish, but that desire may be rerouted from an indestructible loss. The physical action at the end of *Paradise Lost*—turning back, weeping, then turning around to find another place in slow steps betraying the effort of detachment—represents, with tremendous force and brevity, the difficult acquisition of a good symbol. Gaining a space of indeterminancy in which "more" might flourish, the paradise within is being pried loose from its original referent. (p. 296).

Kerrigan's eloquent remarks on Milton's final lines (in which we see "our parents as our equals" and "man is all in all" [pp. 296–297]) serve admirably to persuade us that Milton's finale rescues his poem from its depressed descent into fallen history. But how close Milton has come, in this account, to substituting "the bliss of the eschaton" (p. 297) for a life-giving symbol; how precarious, indeed, and hopeful are Kerrigan's claims for Milton's psychological achievement. Freedom is what the sacred complex promises, a future which is more than a repetition of the past. Yet the idea of a freedom based on submission to a psychological "other," a God of indeterminate ways, seems an illusion which does not speak clearly to our future and remained, even for Milton, a fragile possibility. From a Christian point of view, moreover, the God of this sacred dispensation, creating life's contingencies by withholding and then, perhaps, supplying sudden "motions" in the faithful, seems dangerously close to having repented of the gift of rational choice.

Reason is not primary in Kerrigan's assessment of Milton's virtues, and it is here, apart from objections to his psychoanalytic approach, that his views will find resistance. As in his first book, it is Milton as prophet that Kerrigan values, and in this his second study the emphasis throughout is on the open and intuitive perception over the dead letter of rational discourse, Pseudo-Dionysius not Augustine, symbol not idol. He willingly acknowledges a strong rational element in Milton (*Paradise Regained* in an admittedly discursive poem; *The Christian Doctrine* is hardly the work of a Pseudo-Dionysius), but his devaluation of this aspect of Milton's intellectual make-up comes close to suppression.

Kerrigan's is and will remain not everyone's Milton. He clearly seeks in Milton what he values in life; his book passionately, personally pursues an

open "meditation" on the symbols he believes to shape our lives and literature. As the "blanc" of blindness enabled his author, the inexhaustibility of the "symbol" enables Kerrigan to pursue meaning beyond the limits of what some readers will easily tolerate. But if the unflagging intensity of Kerrigan's discourse can be wearisome or grating, it is often genuinely moving, as in his final pages on the close of Milton's epic. Kerrigan's purpose exceeds the normal limits of literary criticism and deserves a patience which might not be extended elsewhere. I cannot assess his contribution to psychoanalytic theory, but I can value his response to Milton and his clear intention to write a testament of hope for humanity.

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Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction by Maximillian E. Novak. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983. Pp. xvi + 181. $17.95.

Defoe and the Idea of Fiction, 1713–1719 by Geoffrey M. Sill. Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1983. Pp. 190. $22.00.

Defoe has travelled a long way as a canonical author in the last twenty-five years or so, and much of the impetus for that trip has come from Maximillian Novak. By now the dean of American Defoe scholars, Novak has helped shift the center of activity on Defoe from source study and biography to literary criticism that conceives of Defoe not as the agile hack who somehow scribbled one or two books everybody still reads but as one "of the great writers of his time" (p. xiii), the possessor of a richly stocked mind and a specifically focused literary talent. Such revision has gained wide acceptance, and *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction* gathers five of Novak's essays from the last fifteen years that argue convincingly for Defoe's "often-underestimated complexities" (p. xiii) of style and language and that seek to establish Defoe as a superbly self-conscious narrative artist who is much more than the proto-realistic, instinctively gifted mimic who imagined various memorable characters with unprecedented psycho-social richness. Instead, Novak's Defoe is a thinker, "perhaps the most versatile and prolific creator of systems in his age" (p. 13), and his narratives were produced by an imagination that "fused the events of history with the materials of fantasy into a unique type of fiction" (p. xiv).

Inevitably, unity or continuity in collected essays like these is imposed or at least discovered after the fact. Novak's preface and introduction, from which I've been quoting, make only modest claims in those directions, as he admits that his book is singleminded in its exploration of Defoe's "fictive imagination" (p. xiv) rather than unified by a methodology. But Novak's book is in fact unified by his densely contextualized knowledge of Defoe. These essays are immensely informative annotations of some of Defoe's narratives, to some extent a guide to their complicated social and historical contexts, but primarily to their origins in Defoe's intellectual and artistic biography.

Like all commentators on Defoe's narratives, Novak wrestles with the problem of classification. Just what shall we call books like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Memoirs of a Cavalier*? For narratives like these, Novak refines the anachronistic label of novel and expands what he sees as the restrictive achievement of realism. In what may be too cavalier a critical gesture, Novak seems to dismiss Defoe's documentary realism as simply a local device, subordinate to a larger vision that aspires to historical generality and ultimately to mythic or even archetypal significance. He argues with Ian Watt's suggestion that Defoe fashioned a new kind of circumstantial realism, missing Watt's delicate, philosophically informed handling of that notion whereby Defoe's quotidian world is no longer securely positioned in the controlling hierarchies of literary and moral tradition.

What Novak begins as modest reclassification ends as a grand redefinition of Defoe's narratives. Given what they are not (not properly novels and not simply realistic), they must be something else that Defoe intended and that can be recaptured by careful historical reconstruction. Defoe and his age were abandoning older myths and trying to shape new ones. "The concreteness of realistic fiction often gave flesh and blood to what might otherwise have been a highly abstract system of beliefs" (p. 9). This gives the game away. For Novak, literary form is simply a rhetorical device, after the fact of experience and insight, a means for dramatizing ideas rather than an expressive participant in their formation. But what he grants Defoe is more than artistic self-consciousness; it is a sort of powerfully lucid cultural purpose that masters the contradiction between myth and history. Openly in his non-fiction and implicitly in the fiction, Defoe rehearses the "Whig myth of history," but (and this is a key turn in Novak's argument) his "art lay in his ability to convey his myths as true history" (p. 15). The paradox Novak asks us to consider as the unifying center of Defoe's fiction is, then, that his characters are "both highly individualized and mythic, firmly based in history, and capable of floating free from time" (p. 17).

Novak's preliminary summaries are more persuasive and coherent than the essays that follow, and his "attempt to explore Defoe's fictive imagination" turns at times into a rather literal-minded reconstruction, familiar to readers of popular biographies, of what Defoe must have been thinking at this or that point in his life. To be sure, Novak knows more about Defoe, I would guess, than just about anybody, and his speculations about Defoe's motives carry weight and authority. For example, Novak notes that Defoe's career as frantically active political journalist commences just when he began writing memoirs, moral dialogues, and fiction. Few critics have Novak's command of these parallel activities in Defoe's career, and no one else has thought to remark that *Robinson Crusoe* originated in Defoe's "activities as a propagandist for colonization" (p. 26), an assertion borne out by a scheme he described in the *Weekly Journal* of 7 Feb 1719 for a colony at the mouth of the Orinoco (where Crusoe was to be shipwrecked, far from Selkirk's Juan Fernandez). Novak demonstrates with a wealth of detail just how Defoe's involvement as journalist in the human as well as the political events of the day leaves important traces in *Robinson Crusoe*, and his creative process is to some extent on display.

With different degrees of success, Novak's other chapters continue that dis-

play. But his case for Defoe's self-conscious artistry leads Novak to what I consider critical exaggerations whereby *Moll Flanders* becomes an almost Jamesian exercise in which Defoe "was continually manipulating style to achieve narrative effects" (p. 91), in which Defoe's controlling authorial distance fosters moral ambiguities as Moll creates fictions about herself within the fiction itself. This approach works better with *Roxana*, where Defoe's distance seems more consistent and coherent, and Novak's summary of its qualities is definitive: its "interplay between the individual conscience and the laws of God, nature, and men creates a psychological and moral complexity that is unique in early fiction" (p. 120). Novak's most original and stimulating chapter reflects his real strength as a historical scholar. *Memoirs of a Cavalier* appears, as Novak explains its context, as both history and journalism, about the religious wars of the seventeenth century but "also about the threat to religious freedom in Defoe's own England and Europe" (p. 59). Novak precisely shows in this chapter how Defoe seems to have adapted a passage in the *Memoirs* from his experiences as a spy for Harley in Scotland. Supported by convincing particulars like this, Novak's point is that Defoe subordinated history in the *Memoirs* and in *A Journal of the Plague Year* to the several purposes of fiction without cancelling the former, achieving in these two books genuinely historical fiction.

And yet, when Novak balances these specific obserations with speculations, about Defoe's creative process, the results are to my mind often unconvincing, even at times banal. Noting the many storms in *Robinson Crusoe* (and also Defoe's book on the great storm of 1703), Novak sees an anticipation of later sensibility: "Like many painters of the second half of the eighteenth century (one thinks immediately of Loutherbourg and early Turner) and the Gothic novelists, Defoe was intrigued by human distress in the face of natural disasters" (p. 31). Even if one accepts that (and Defoe's interest in disaster can just as plausibly be read as fascination with the administrative problems disorder brings rather than emotional involvement with its moving and sublime aspect), there is nothing critically useful in it. Such a remark tells us more about Novak than Defoe. It suggests that Novak has succumbed to the temptation of imagining his own Defoe, constructing a plausible enough character and sensibility from his immersion in the writings of Daniel Defoe, as if the transition from book to author to reader were seamlessly informative, as if historical scholarship could speak with perfect confidence of an author from his texts. Perhaps Novak has been led to this biographer's hubris by his clear irritation with the critical approach to Defoe that speaks of his "unconscious" or naive artistry. Novak's Defoe is at times almost a solemn parody of the self-conscious novelistic master, brooding like Vico, on the meaning of history as he writes *Memoirs of a Cavalier* and *A Journal of the Plague Year*, or pondering the dark psychopathology of the human mind as he writes *Roxana*, "his most determined effort to look into the heart of a character" (p. 110). This thoughtful, systematic, and utterly coherent Defoe seems no more correct, and a good deal less interesting, than the harried journalist, writing fiction on nerve and instinct.

Novak's title contains the secret of his revision of Defoe's literary achievement, in which the larger resonances of myth and history replace the local, perhaps lucky, effects called realism. But Novak's use of myth is at times su-

perficial, almost gratuitous. For example, he finds Defoe's style at one point in *Moll Flanders* "both concise and repetitious at the same time, a technique that Levi-Strauss has found to be the essential quality of myth" (p. 91). Such an invocation of myth suggests unconscious inevitabilities, psycho-cultural formations that speak through the writer and are in large part defined by cultural rather that personal experience. But what Novak seems to be after in Defoe is rather more self-conscious and deliberate fabulation, what might be rendered more accurately as "ideology," culturally derived assumptions about the world that, in Marxist terms, disguise or evade actual social circumstances. In his sometimes expansive and celebratory essays, however, Novak seeks the largest psycho-cultural resonances in Defoe's narratives, and his commitment to Defoe the self-conscious master precludes interest in the deformations of ideology within his fiction.

Geoffrey M. Sill's *Defoe and the Idea of Fiction 1713–1719* is much more narrowly focused and specifically concerned with how Defoe came to integrate in *Robinson Crusoe* fictional form with that cluster of moral and political ideas Novak calls the "Whig myth." Using the recent work of revisionist historians like J. G. A. Pocock, H. T. Dickinson, and Geoffrey Holmes, Sill provides an excellent summary of this ideology to show how Defoe deliberately effected the transition from pamphleteer and propagandist to novelist who made "ideas inhere in fiction" (p. 25), for whom in *Robinson Crusoe* anyway "ideology and fiction were related and interdependent forms of knowledge" (p. 25). Drawing on Novak's contention that Defoe developed a working theory of fiction, Sill carefully traces Defoe's development in various shorter pieces from the period 1713–1719 of a technique whereby fictional elements are used not just to illustrate moral and political ideas" (p. 24). That sounds more complex than it turns out to be as Sill proceeds, for what he means is that Defoe was learning to dramatize "ideas not as objects, but rather as the subjects of consciousness" (p. 25), to embody ideas in plot and character.

Sill's book is exceedingly detailed about Defoe's political pamphlets in these years. His effort is (to simplify perhaps unfairly) to find fictional elements in some of them and even to suggest that Defoe's mode of argument became more and more fictional from 1710 to 1719 because he consistently failed to persuade through what Sill calls the "normal expository genres of expression" (p. 47). Sill's meticulous scholarship leads him to an evocation of Defoe's journalism that is sometimes a distraction from his guiding purpose. Detailed discussions of the circumstances and effects of various pamphlets surrounding the Hanoverian succession seem to have as their main point that Defoe grew disillusioned as his ironies failed. In the long run, there is a disparity between Sill's precise scholarship and the conclusions it allows him to draw about Defoe's development as a writer. He makes much, for example, of the *Secret History of the White Staff* (1714–15), a dramatization of Harley's fall from power. Admitting that the formal resemblance of this book to fiction is "slight," Sill goes on to praise its power as a "real-life tragedy," and to identify its intended effect "to sicken us, shock us, and alarm us into an appreciation of Harley's service in the queen's interest and into the necessity of his politics of moderation as the best response to absolutism from both sides" (p. 89). Such an effect is plausible within the richly detailed context of Defoe's life and times Sill provides, but it doesn't survive past that context. He

can hardly prove that it had any such effect on Defoe's audience, and his critical evocation of it leaves it dead on the page, of interest only to the historian. It is difficult to accept Sill's characterization of the *Secret History of the White Staff* as "ideologically very powerful" when he produces no corresponding narrative power to enforce that ideology. He seems to mean only that the narrative simplifies events and characters to make an ideological point.

Sill's problem is that the fictional elements he isolates in Defoe's journalism are of little complexity or formal interest; what he calls the "novelist in progress" is sharply visible in only a few of his examples (for instance, an insider's account of a meeting between Queen Anne and a French agent in *Minutes of the Negotiations of Monsr. Mesnager* [1717]). And even there, Sill emphasizes, what really matters are not the vivid, personalized details in the scene but the "significant ideological message" served by that liveliness, that the Queen and not just a treacherous faction favored avoiding war with France over the succession.

In the end, Sill's rigorously informed, minutely circumstantial account of these works seeks to establish the self-conscious origins of Defoe's career as a writer of fiction and to make his intentions absolutely central to the meaning of *Robinson Crusoe*. Like Novak, Sill is committed to an ideal of historical scholarship whereby an author's accomplishment is most fully (or even solely) understood in terms of controlled intentions and self-directed development. The real point of combing patiently through Defoe's journalism is to mark the stages in that development that make *Robinson Crusoe* not a lucky improvisation but the culmination of nearly a decade of literary experimentation toward what Sill calls the ideological transformation of history.

Sill's concluding chapter on *Robinson Crusoe* is, in effect, a reductive political reading whereby the mature Crusoe possesses a specifically political ideology of "moral restraint." Having explored the life of an embodiment of that principle in his 1718 *Memoirs of the Duke of Shrewsbury*, Defoe in Sill's rather schematic account designed Crusoe's story to trace a difficult personal transformation from a compulsion to adventure to that ideal of self-regulation summed up in cautious politicians like Shrewsbury and Harley. Once again, the scholarship is impressive, the conclusions drawn from it rather unconvincing. Sill's thesis involves a logical leap: Defoe treated various political issues in the pamphlets he wrote before *Robinson Crusoe*, and he attempted in semi-fictional renderings of political events and personalities to dramatize ideas and embody an ideology of selfless patriotism in heroes like Harley and Shrewsbury; so therefore the novel was written as "a way of putting his ideas together into a new moral system that would help to resolve the clash of men, parties, creeds, and interests" (p. 158). I find this plausible but hardly proven, useful and perhaps true to Defoe's intentions but partial and even reductive as a summary of the imaginative heart of *Robinson Crusoe*.

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Romantic Contraries: Freedom versus Destiny by Peter L. Thorslev, Jr. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984. Pp. ix + 225. $21.50.

The dust jacket dubs Professor Thorslev's book "magisterial," a term that tends to impress both positively and negatively, imbued as it is with connotations not just of the authoritative but also of the dictatorial. Happily, the comprehensive sweep of this excellent book is not accompanied by any attendant narrowness of vision. Indeed, the study is refreshingly free of the sort of portentous pronouncements that undermine so many discussions of the history of ideas. This is indeed a powerful study, and its power is strengthened, its credibility increased, by the careful and reasoned diplomacy with which the author approaches his ambitious task here. One of the most engaging features of Thorslev's book, in fact, is its *tone*: the author is generous with his praise of his predecessors, meticulously fair when he finds fault with their work, and understanding of the complexities that lead writers—and their critics—to occasional missteps. Furthermore, he knows when to take the properly ironic stance of self-caution—a stance, we discover, that figures very largely in the final section of the book, as a model of one Romantic response to an "open" universe of unconditioned freedom. Thus the author anticipates our difficulties with his subject matter, helping us maintain our intellectual equilibrium with reassuring acknowledgements of our predicament ("Somehow, however, about this point the critical mind is apt to balk: the road becomes too slippery for confident footing"—p. 69). The effect of such comments *is* reassuring, for in a work as highly compressed as this one, it is good to know the author is aware both of his demands upon us and of our likely questions and objections.

In brief, Thorslev poses what is typically accounted a quintessential Romantic problem, the apparent conflict between individual freedom and collective destiny. Stated thus, the problem implies the concept of dialectic and carries with it the skeptical framework the Romantics inherited from their Enlightenment predecessors. Thorslev's is a study of terminology and its implications for our understanding of the Romantics. He announces early on, "I have no new solutions to propose, only some clarification of terms" (p. 6). And yet, as the book amply demonstrates, it is precisely such a clarification of terms we most require if we are to return to the concepts of freedom and destiny the sense in which the Romantics understood those concepts. Nowhere is the value of such a clarification more startlingly apparent than in Thorslev's concise rescue of the crusty William Godwin from the bog of misunderstanding in which he has been mired for the better part of two centuries. Thorslev presents us with the Godwin known by Shelley and his contemporaries, the ethical optimist (*not*, as is usually assumed, the rationalist, mechanist materialist) whose famous "five propositions" of irresistible reason (from *Political Justice*) are the philosophical cornerstone for a theory of human perfectibility founded upon a thoroughly *examined* life, a life of informed choices rather than blind habit, a moral and ethical existence in and of the conscious mind. By directing us to a reconsideration of Godwin's inherited terminology (and its requisite freight of connotation and convention), Thorslev effectively illustrates the value of the clarification he everywhere advocates.

But Godwin is merely a single example of the larger pattern of clarification that governs this study. More important are the reconsideration of the central concepts, freedom and destiny, the world views implicit in them, and the three key alternatives among which the Romantic tended to choose in formulating their responses to these concepts. Thorslev reminds us that while for the Romantic freedom is "a prerequisite for moral responsibility, and therefore for a sense of self," it is also highly separative. Destiny, on the other hand, "is social and collective; it gives man a sense of shared purpose and mission" (p. 16). Perfect freedom, however, easily verges into total isolation, a radical rupture of natural relations with one's own species, and the most perfectly realized stage of individuality thus becomes the most irreversible alienation.

Particularly intriguing in Thorslev's book is his contention that for the Romantics the problem of individual (or even collective) identity stems more from a threat to one's sense of *destiny*—of community—than from any threat to one's sense of freedom. Put another way, we might say the threat lies in the possibility that, contrary to Wordsworth's claim in "The Old Cumberland Beggar," we may *not* "have all of us one human heart." If the inherent impulse of the "natural order of things" is in fact toward entropy and disarray ("things fall apart") rather than toward cohesion and coherence, then perfect freedom must ultimately lie in a Promethean self-reliance (the "concentered recompense" of Byron's "Prometheus") and personal definition of freedom which is humanly relative and cosmologically indifferent, Thorslev argues. Hence he considers the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various Enlightenment cosmographies and theodicies that inform their Romantic descendants. Principal among these are the atomistic and empirical ("billiard ball") and the mathematical and rationalistic ("clockwork") models, which begin with a similar mechanistic premise but proceed to quite different views of "destiny." The former suggests a world of pure randomness (as in Hardy's "Hap")—a universe of unpredetermined "accidents"—while the latter suggests a fully destined universe, teleologically arranged and characterized by a (perhaps unknowable) design.

The conflicting models of experience Thorslev traces to these world-views, and to the theodicies that seek to account for the relative presence (or absence) in them of an immanent or transcendent heavenly Designer, constitute the basis for the three alternative models of response the author attributes both to the European Romantics and—to a considerable extent—to their immediate predecessors in the Enlightenment. The organic universe—the post-Kantian and Coleridgean model—frees humanity from the necessitarian burden of a world of mechanical and efficient causes and restores a sense of purposive freedom, of organic self-determination. Within such a model, the individual gains a sense of both personal significance and collective (or community) identity from her or his part in the grand cosmic plan of integrated development that informs the entire natural universe. Here the clearest philosophical revelation (or discovery) consists in the recognition of one's unique-yet-shared status within the total scheme of things: part and whole are mutually reflecting, mutually defining. For the organicist, Thorslev argues, excessive self-consciousness (what Blake termed the Selfhood) is the demon to be cast out, the source of alienation that is eradicated by a retreat into the

unconscious, the seat of creativity ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is a paradigm of this dilemma). The ideal state, in the benevolently-designed organic universe, is akin to that of the Eolian harp: one is unconsciously attuned to the breeze of an immanent destiny which provokes the strings to a music but half its own.

At the other pole is the world-view that is entirely self-conscious, the *ironic* view of a totally "open" universe. In this arrangement the individual must continually adjust to changes she or he cannot predict in order to work out an *individual* destiny in the apparent absence of any clear operant design to the universe. Here the individual becomes a self-conscious performer (Byron's narrator commenting on the form of *Don Juan*, a natural Romantic descendant of Tristram Shandy). This individual defines her or his terms and values on the basis of an *observed* universe; Thorslev cites Candide and Wilhelm Meister as prototypical examples. Like the organic universe, the open universe is one of process, but of process without the certainly (or even the likely possibility) of closure, of culmination in any sort of absolute "Truth." It is a disconcerting universe, of course, for if every assertion is inherently denied, then every thesis has a separate and equal antithesis—a perfectly balanced skeptical, dialectical tension. This state suggests that of the perpetual "Mental Fight" that inheres in Blake's doctrine of Contraries, a world in which all responsibility is placed, ultimately, upon the purely *individual* choices made by each actor in the piece. Irony is virtually an instinctive attitude in any such scheme, for it provides us with a measure of self-protection in the guise of ambiguity and ambivalence. Taken to it extreme, Thorslev contends toward the end of his book, this view leads to aestheticism and Pater's "hard, gem-like flame." And though he discounts him, Thorslev might in fact have emphasized Oscar Wilde (as well as his Algernon and Dorian) as the logical extension of such a view—a life in and of conscious performance.

Lying between these poles, figuratively at least, is the Gothic universe, an essentially absurd (and absurdist) universe in which inexplicable, capricious, and generally malevolent forces regularly exercise their sheer, brute power in disrupting any apparent design (if there is one at all), and to which the only reasonable response is therefore a Promethean defiance of the inscrutable destiny that frustrates humanity's freedom. If the organic view suggests one should seek to "attune" to an encompassing natural order of things, and if the open or ironic view suggests one should seek to assess and manipulate the perceived order, the Gothic view holds that one ought simply to *defy* that order. This is Bryon's Prometheus, of course, not Shelley's, and the Gothic view leads in the direction, finally, of the grotesque rather than the sublime.

In working out the framework of these alternatives, Thorslev demonstrates his comprehensive mastery not just of literary and cultural history but also of philosophy and the history of ideas. Intellectually acute and methodologically sound, *Romantic Contraries* is a work that seems certain to have an effect on subsequent Romantic (and post-Enlightenment generally) scholarship. While modestly suggesting that he will essentially help us "clean up and clarify our thinking on a few matters," Thorslev takes us with him on a stimulating and rewarding expedition of re-discovery and re-definition. To be at once learned and engaging is no mean accomplishment, and yet it is this felicitous combination, together with the deft handling of prodigious scholar-

ship, that distinguishes Thorslev's book. It is, indeed, in the most positive sense of the word, a magisterial work.

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Robert Browning: His Poetry and Audiences by Lee Erickson. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984. Pp. 287. $25.00.

The main thesis of this book can be stated quite simply. Browning imagined an ideal audience that was intimate and capable of returning the artist's offered sympathy. In actuality, the one earthly audience for Browning was Elizabeth, and, beyond her, God. In his early poetry, Browning had not discovered an appropriate poetic mode for addressing an audience but preferred to think that addressing an immediate audience was unnecessary. The successes of *Men and Women*, however, reflect his discovery of an appropriate audience in Elizabeth. After her death, Browning became more and more self-indulgent, supposing that no audience really matters except God.

That is the simple scheme. In practice, the subject is more complicated because Erickson deals with two categories of audiences—those who read Browning's poems and for whom he wrote them, and audiences within the poems. The satisfactory perception of many of Browning's poems, especially the important monologues, depends upon how we understand the relationship between the speakers of these poems and *their* audiences. Very early in his study, Erickson opposes one traditional view of Browning's monologues, asserting that "Browning's poems do not begin with a self-sufficient ego that through its perception and expression orders and shapes experience, but instead with a speaker who is seeking form and a sense of self in the world" (p. 17). Thus, for example, in the dramatic monologues of *Men and Women*, which Erickson sees as the apex of his achievement, Browning shows how their audiences help the speakers create images of themselves. Later poems generally lack audiences that serve this function, a lack that is the source of their weakness.

Some non-dramatic lyrics also reveal the significance of audience in Browning's view of poetry. Using "Memorabilia," for which Shelley is supposedly the proper audience, Erickson concludes that the poetic problem for Browning is "the creation of a self-conscious identity in the moment of recognizing the divine in the audience to whom one is speaking" (p. 145). The irony here is that whereas Browning recognized the force of audience within his poems, he seemed to resist that force in his own work, almost consciously resisting the kind of implied reader that Iser has made so familiar to literary critics. According to Erickson's thesis (and it is a convincing one on the whole), until he found Elizabeth, Browning disliked the notion of being shaped or understood by an essentially alien audience.

For clarity's sake, Erickson establishes a scheme according to which audiences in Browning's poems are present or absent, single or multitudinous; he draws conclusions about Browning's values as they are revealed in these audience types. Crowds, for example, are negative audiences, sometimes even

ominous, as in the witnessing shades of "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." This scheme is not always rewarding, but then Erickson's purpose is less the categorizing of audiences than the illuminating of Browning's expectations about his own creative effort. He is successful in this purpose, though he could have achieved it more concisely. As it is, the main thesis of his book is repeated too often, whereas the readings of individual poems, though always interesting, often depart significantly from the main thread of the argument. Nonetheless, this study, which by its title might have suggested the kind of loose social review of Ian Jack's recent *The Poet and His Audience* or the thorough surveying of a career exemplified by George Ford's *Dickens and His Readers*, offers a fresh method of studying a poet obviously concerned with the subject of audience and offers a model that might be applied to less overtly dramatic poets such as Tennyson or Arnold.

Wayne State University John R. Reed

True Correspondence: A Phenomenology of Thomas Hardy's Novels by Bruce Johnson. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1983. Pp. 168. $18.00.

The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Study in Art and Ideas by William E. Buckler. New York: New York University Press, 1983. Pp. xii + 303. $27.50.

Bruce Johnson and William E. Buckler are riding hard to rescue Thomas Hardy from imprisonment in the interpretations of others. The passion and intelligence with which Johnson executes his mission can almost make one forget the occasional haste with which he cuts off other approaches to Hardy. William E. Buckler, however, repeatedly stampedes others who have equal claim to holding the key that will liberate Hardy's meaning.

In his study of six novels, Johnson argues the secondariness of social reform and philosophical speculation. Instead, Hardy's most profound achievement is the "linking of the ancient pastoral with the most advanced evolutionism and phenomenology" (p. 128). By emphasizing the role the classical otium plays in Hardy's use of the pastoral and tragedy and in Hardy's vision of the potential of modern consciousness, Johnson impedes any tendency to limit Hardy's pastoral to nostalgia and tragedy to pessimism. Johnson also very effectively and sometimes beautifully argues that Hardy's explanations of human and nonhuman processes in terms of one another constitute a significant habit of mind; however, it is not always clear why he labels this habitual practice phenomenological rather than metaphorical. Perhaps this study is most compelling during the discussion of Hardy's indebtedness to a geological and anthropological sense of the human in time as well as to a Darwinian enchantment with "evolutionary connections among all life . . . above the infamous 'survival of the fittest'" (p. 115). Johnson's measured unfolding of the confluence of these dispositions and influences makes his book impressive.

In the act of underlining Hardy's preoccupation with the affinity between the human and nonhuman, Johnson ends up inflating it at the expense of

other preoccupations and posing firm boundaries between apparent opposites that Hardy tried to maintain in dynamic if not dialectic relationship. Though he begins the book by steadily complicating the dichotomy between otium and the aspiring mind in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*, by the end he neglects the perspective on opposites with which he credits Hardy. Protagonists' severe conflicts with the competing claims of systems and feelings, society and nature, are simplified to an either/or problem. The crucial problem of *Jude the Obscure* becomes "whether Jude fails because of society's and Oxford's shortcomings (whether we have a true 'reform' novel), or whether the failure does not lie in Jude's faith in learning and Sue Bridehead" (p. 132). Because he cherishes Hardy's advocacy of a new Nature as an expansion "beyond society and social relations," Johnson isolates problems of society from the problems of individuals as Hardy does not. That he can, in his discussion of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, invoke Hardy's accepting stance toward the naturalness of sexuality and fecundity without once mentioning the fact of pregnancy also indicates where Johnson stops in his delineation of the complexity of Hardy. Few writers, male or female, have considered as sympathetically and dejectedly as Hardy the clash between the vagaries of desire and the concreteness of reproduction. The consequent social restriction of nature contemplated by Hardy as well as the adherence of individuals to persistently inextricable social and natural laws even when they work at cross purposes are sources of tragedy that Hardy resolved neither through analytical philosophy, nor reformist programs, nor recourse to the natural, nor phenomenology.

Though questions of reform are, as Johnson claims, "secondary," Hardy never manages to isolate the secondary from his preferred primary vision in the manner that leads Johnson to claim, "This continuity of consciousness with 'lower' forms of life and finally with matter itself (in its dynamic and evolutionary aspect) is, let there be no doubt, the very keystone of Hardy's art viewed phenomenologically" (p. 153). Ironically, in his ultimate emphasis on Hardy's ideal consciousness as a solution to modern problems, Johnson inadvertently retrieves the question of reform, transubstantiated through idealism. This is a step Hardy never took; in taking it Johnson perhaps enables his very interesting project.

After trenchantly asserting the superiority of New Criticism over other contemporary methodologies, William E. Buckler reads *The Life of Thomas Hardy* as a quintessential expression, through both explicit statement and anecdotal form, of Hardy's sense of himself primarily as a poet rather than a novelist or an individual. Then he assembles selected statements about poetry by Hardy in order to prompt readings that share Hardy's and Buckler's resistance to ideological and autobiographical concerns. In the next chapter, Buckler offers exemplary readings of virtually all the poems in Hardy's first volume, *Wessex Poems and Other Verses*, "as fair a slice of Hardy's poetic endeavors as any volume he published" (p. 199). By carefully directing attention to tone, prosodic phrasing, contradiction, melodrama, humor and the use of understatement and clichés, Buckler compellingly traces disparities between the intentions and understandings of the speakers of the poems and the poet. The book then ends with readings of the "In Tenebris" poems, Poems of 1912–1913, and other selected poems from *Satires of Circumstances*

and *Moments of Vision*, readings dedicated to disproving a tradition of emphasis on Hardy's pessimism. Buckler credits Hardy's poetry with the power to help us "build a personal refuge against brute force and spiritual madness" (p. 198).

Buckler is correct that obsession with "ideological consistency and autobiographical trustworthiness . . . impose . . . an imaginatively intolerable burden of self-reference" (p. 46) on Hardy and deprive readers of learning and feeling anything new or less accessible than opinions or facts. But he imposes an equally intolerable burden when he defines the "serious" reader as "dedicated to the principle that only the direct, internal evidence of the poem is a fit criterion for asserting its significance" (p. 169). Surely we must allow for more variety of approaches and even idiosyncracies if people are to construct "personal refuge" from such spare poems. Furthermore, some readers do not share the assumption that personal refuge is a primary and exclusive value and some of us see that assumption as ideological. For some readers, a poet such as Hardy is interesting because of the achievements and the limitations of both his speakers' perspectives and the implied perspective of the poet, as well as because of the poet's policy of impersonation and depersonalization. In understanding the speakers as both imaginative creations and refractions of Hardy's warring impulses and thoughts, in part pinpointed through ideological and autobiographical investigations, the representative and the universal are distinguished. Such readers do not force a poet to stand for the universal or fault him for not doing so. In contrast, Buckler constricts the reader's attention to the play of language until it explodes into an appreciation of knowledge through myth, "the most valuable lesson that any of us can learn" (p. 112); he whittles away at various levels on which poems can be read in order to subsume poetry to archetypal myth.

The sublimity Buckler strives for, clearly indicated when he associates poetry and divinity early in the book, leads predictably not only to close readings that close out many meanings of individual poems, but also to summary dismissal of a poem such as "The Ivy Wife" as only a description of ivy without any particularly solemn truth because it, "if one translates its allegory as signifying the destructive/self-destructive effects of a clinging wife, is almost violently bitter" (p. 158). The violently bitter, evasive, dogmatic and autobiographical Hardy deserve to be read alongside Buckler's Hardy "who wanted to show people how to nurture the unpracticed poet in themselves, how to discover the poetry of their own lives, and how, by what can legitimately be called poetic perspective, to gain a degree of mastery over what might otherwise be a life devoid of solace" (p. 105). Only then can we benefit as Hardy did from poetry and novels that evoke both the benefits and costs of mastery over life through art and the decision to detach oneself philosophically and artfully from closer scrutiny of the personal and the ideological.

Vanderbilt University Mary Childers

Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle by Zdsislaw Najder, trans. Halina Carroll-Najder. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983. Pp. xxi + 647. $30.00.

Conrad Under Familial Eyes ed. Zdzislaw Najder, trans. Halina Carroll-Najder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. xxi + 282. $37.50.

The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad: 1861–1897, vol. 1, ed. Frederick E. Karl and Laurence Davies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Pp. lxvii + 446. $39.50.

Zdzislaw Najder's *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle* won the 1984 prize awarded by the Modern Language Association for distinguished research by independent scholars (Mr. Najder has been in exile from his native Poland since 1981 and is currently director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe). The judges describe his work as a "major contribution to literary history, a solidly documented biography that transcends mere narrative." His biography builds carefully on documentation of the sort published in his *Conrad Under Familial Eyes* and his earlier collection *Conrad's Polish Background* (1964). Unlike many previous biographical critics of Conrad, Najder has a knowledge of the Polish language, literature, and history. He is in the position of knowing some facts which make earlier speculations appear foolish. As he notes in his "Introduction" to *Conrad Under Familial Eyes*, the documents simply knock down "irresponsibly fantastic statements" (p. xii) that Conrad's father was a "brooding, humorless fanatic" or that his mother was a "'cold' and 'austere' person." Najder is careful to separate what can be known from existing evidence from what is mere speculation, and he is wary of going very far without such corroboration. He avoids using Conrad's fiction as evidence for biographical generalizations and, in his "Preface" to *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*, he says that he aims to provide Conrad's readers with "a chronicle of the writer's life and thought, marginally touching his fiction, with which they can cope themselves" (p. viii). The result is a study directed frequently against the excesses of previous biographers, but with only tangential reference to Conrad's stories. Najder claims (and deserves to get) recognition for his extensive historical research, his speculative restraint, and his good common-sense judgment. In short, he makes the realist's plea, that his story of Conrad has a privileged relationship to reality, to the events of Conrad's life, which is more than "mere narrative," in the words of the Modern Language Association prize committee. What is missing from Najder's study is any plausible explanation of why Conrad created the fictional web, the shimmering haze of his narratives like "Heart of Darkness" and *Lord Jim*.

Let's face it: literary biography is narrative, a form of historical fiction, a combination of invention and plausible construction. The biographer can tend to be an archivist, accumulating without any selectivity of judgment all existing documents. This monumental approach is well illustrated in *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad: 1861–1897* where every extant letter, in English, French, or Polish, is collected and translated. Every reader approaches this mass of documents with some sort of "screen" or framework of prior interest and sifts and arranges as he reads, casting some or most of the letters into forgetfulness because they do not seem "interesting," or illuminating to

his concerns. A critic interested in the interaction of Conrad's French syntax and his English practice will hold in memory letters in French which illustrate slightly odd turns of phrase replicated in Conrad's English prose. Another reader, interested in the economic basis of art, will count the shillings and pence paid per word for fiction written by Conrad, balanced against the outlay necessary for his daily household expenses. Other readers will likely never remember such sorts of information once they have browsed through the letters enclosed in this volume. What remains after a careful reading is shaped largely by what questions are in the mind of the reader when he takes up the letters.

If it is true that every book has somewhere its anti-book, and that the whole enterprise of literary scholarship is to create and bring together the antithetical theses so that they neutralize each other, then the true begetter of Najder's biography is Ford Madox Ford's *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance* (1924). Within sixty days of the death of his former friend and collaborator, Ford rushed into print his memorial promising that his account "contains no documentation at all; for it no dates have been looked up, even all the quotations but two have been left unverified, coming from the author's memory. It is the writer's *impression* of a writer who vowed himself *impressionist*. Where the writer's memory has proved to be at fault over a detail afterwards out of curiosity looked up, the writer has allowed the fault to remain on the page; but as to the truth of the *impression* as a whole the writer believes that no man would care—or dare—to impugn it" (p. 6). Typical of Ford's rather tenuous hold on reality, the text then wanders off into wild constructions far from known historical fact—some adding to the drama of the tale, others apparently self-serving aggrandizement of Ford's own role in Conrad's life, others perhaps merely the result of his foggy memory arranging and constructing fragments of experience some twenty years gone by. Conrad's English wife, Jessie, found this book "detestable" and wrote her own recollection of her husband, who seemed to her unpredictable, moody, almost childish. The projections of Ford and of Jessie Conrad were followed by many others. We have a Freudian Conrad inhibited by sexual topics and living in the shadow of his father, Apollo, the great Polish patriot. We have also a swashbuckling, romantic Conrad duelling over a woman and sailing the seven seas. There is an alienated Conrad, a Byronic Conrad, a Marxist Conrad, until finally Najder says, "Enough of these waxworks figures, here is the bare truth! Conrad was exactly like the ordinary man." To be sure, he was an ordinary man who happened to write a half-dozen literary masterpieces in a language he did not really learn until he was an adult, whose father was confined in a foreign penal settlement for his impractical and idealistic political beliefs, who was a ship's officer in the period of the crucial transition from sail to steam shipping, and who travelled to remote corners of what we now call the third-world looking at the impact of capitalism and imperialism at the grinding edge of primitive cultures.

The interest in Najder's study is not only in the light it sheds on Conrad, but also in the questions it raises about what biography is, and more broadly how a text of any sort is connected to "reality." Najder feels that the proper function of a biographer is "something of the function of a lexicographer. He establishes the meaning of signs used by the given author by pointing not

only at his intentions but, much more important, at his cultural background and resources. The biographer's textual function does not essentially consist in explaining private allusions or subconsciously used codes but in identifying the scope within which we can define the meanings of words, images, and conventions employed" (p. vii). Given such a view, it is striking that Conrad was a peculiarly mobile figure, both geographically and socially, moving constantly from one context to another: Poland, Russia, France, England, the high seas; patriot's son, prisoner's dependent, family's pride and despair, ship's officer, English man of letters.

It is no wonder that even "Conrad" (not his real name, of course) was not sure who he was, and began early what Najder calls his auto-mythologizing, creating "cherished various self-images, sometimes contradicting not only the facts, but each other" (p. xi). Najder is quick to explain that such self-construction is not simply lying. It appears to be linked with Conrad's literary creativity as a means of psychotherapeutic compensation. Najder assumes that somewhere beneath all the twisting and fabrication there is a real Conrad cleverly hidden, but recoverable where facts can be found. I am not so sure. In one sense, such a view will merely lead back to Freudian speculation. If the real Conrad is a bundle of socially unacceptable impulses repressed at great difficulty only to emerge in a displaced form in his dreamlike fiction, the biographer's activity must be remote from Najder's project to act like a lexicographer defining fields of context from which the meanings of words blossom in orderly lexica. But Najder clearly focuses, not on the private personality, but on the public persona of his man. He does not speculate about what might be so deep in Conrad's mind that even Conrad himself did not know about it, but on what can be known about Conrad as he lived from day to day in society. In this sense, Najder is apparently talking about public roles available or acceptable in a given historical and social context, rather than the private personality.

Consider one of Conrad's notorious falsifications: his idealization of the nature of life on a sailing ship in the later Nineteenth Century. Historical facts seem to indicate that such life was brutal, dangerous, dirty, often made worse by the incompetence of co-workers, and only minimally supervised by marine courts. Conrad created a myth of lean beauty, human dignity, companionship, and high professional and moral standards for the seaman's calling. Najder examines this contrast between the "reality" of life at sea and Conrad's myth and correctly prefers the unreal, "The subjective personal truth is the essential truth" (p. 163). Ford would have said the same: Conrad's impression of the sea is more important than what life at sea "really" was like. But perhaps the issue is deeper still.

Perhaps all those value-laden terms used to describe the "real" life at sea are predicated on prior attitudes of the observer so that the "reality" that seems brutal, dangerous, and dirty has been interpreted and screened by an observer just as much as the contrary seeming "myth"? It is not so much a situation of truth submerged beneath a fanciful imagining as of one impression balanced against its contradiction, both largely created by the observing frame of reference.

What, then, would a biography be but an arbitrary construction screening and shaping an impression of a pattern of behavior? Such public behavior is

similarly shaped by the social and historical opportunities offered for action. Najder perhaps maintains that his picture of Conrad is true because it corresponds with the best possible understanding of the expected public roles possible for Conrad to play in crucial periods of his life. What makes Conrad interesting to the reader is, however, not the public role he played, but, in the conflict of his private personality against the limitations of his publicly possible identity, that he was able to expand his roles beyond all reasonable expectations. It is as likely that he could turn into a fabulous bird and fly away from his personal predicament in the early 1890s, as that he would miraculously turn into a great novelist, English landowner, father and husband, called "Conrad." Is this public face that he invented for himself really more plausible than the fanciful images of him invented by Ford, Jessie Conrad, or a host of subsequent biographers?

Najder's chronicle is the most weighty biographical study as yet of Conrad's background based on an analysis of historical data. It is a model of its kind, although it could be argued that the kind of information it supplies is largely beside the point so far as reading Conrad's work is concerned. Its interest is not so much what it tells us about Conrad, as in the questions it raises concerning such issues as the projection of self in society, the relation of one's public role to one's self-identity, and the connection of all narrative to reality.

University of Wisconsin, Madison Todd K. Bender

Emily Dickinson and the Problem of Others by Christopher E. G. Benfey. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984. Pp. 131. $15.00.

I am sorry that I must begin my review of Professor Benfey's very bright, very brief book on Emily Dickinson with a complaint. Throughout his discussion, he refers to me as Karl Miller, but that never was my name and isn't now. It is a small gaffe, but I have not checked all of his references and do not know if there are others.

Benfey's book takes up the issue that has concerned Dickinson critics the most: How did this very private poet manage to relate—to the Universe, to Nature, to Society, to other individuals, to anything at all outside herself? How, given the importance to her of her privacy, did she ever connect?

Benfey begins by writing about Dickinson's poetry *as* an exploration of privacy. She knew her privacy as something aesthetically enabling. What Dickinson knew she needed was that something about her remain hidden from the view of others. She had to keep a world to herself, even as she was fully ambivalent about it: she felt the need to be left to herself, and feared that she might be left out of the human circle altogether.

Among the "others" in Dickinson's life which Benfey discusses are her neighbors. Nearness to something or someone was for her a problem of knowledge. One cannot know the neighbor, and yet one can be near the neighbor. She knew, he says, that nearness to others precludes knowledge of them. Again, this is a very important issue, but again it is developed by Ben-

fey all too briefly. He invokes Rilke in this discussion, but so sparely that Rilke is actually of little help.

Dickinson's connection with the Universe and Nature, Benfey says, is through a skepticism like Emerson's and Thoreau's: while one cannot know with certainty that the world exists, we cannot *live* such skepticism about the world's existence. She may have needed her deep skepticism, but she also knew that to live our lives we must forget our skepticism about the world. This is a valuable point in our attempt to understand Dickinson's "Nearness to Tremendousness." She knew she could not know the truth about Nature and yet had to acknowledge her nearness and therefore had an involvement with it. It is just that Benfey's discussion of this large issue is also much too brief, and Emerson and Thoreau are used all too circumspectly to help us understand her.

The final section in Benfey's little book has to do with Dickinson's concept of her body and others' bodies. Although he finds her playing the role of anorexia in many of her poems ("It would have starved a Gnat/To live so small as I--"), Benfey also finds her a very sensual person in her connections with others. Again, the arguments about her affirmation of the body are not explored very fully, and the parallels with Whitman are not developed fully enough to be convincing.

As I hope I show, most of Benfey's points are very good ones. He gives this private poet far more connections with "others" than I had realized myself. But I cannot understand why they aren't all developed much more fully. Benfey explicates the unused Dickinson poems, and usually brilliantly, but not very many of those. Benfey would like to make the claim that with the example of Emily Dickinson, he can say something about "the sophistication of American thinking in general," but his book is really much too small for so large a claim.

San Diego State University Karl Keller

The Transparent Lyric: Reading and Meaning in the Poetry of Stevens and Williams by David Walker. Princeton and Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1984. Pp. xx + 204. $21.00.

"Bare lists of words," Emerson maintains in "The Poet," "are found suggestive to an imaginative and excited mind," and he goes on to report that Lord Chatham would read in Bailey's Dictionary when preparing to speak in Parliament. What sort of speech, one wonders, would Lord Chatham have delivered after reading this somewhat scrambled vest-pocket dictionary compiled by William Carlos Williams?

Among
of
green

stiff

old
bright

broken
branch
come

white
sweet
May

again

The reader of imaginative and excited mind has little difficulty recognizing in this bare list of words suggestions of the familiar *reverdie*: "come / white / sweet / May / again." He must then account for the preceding eight words —two prepositions, five adjectives, and a noun. Here, the title comes to his rescue: "The Locust Tree in Flower." From that ikon, a possible syntax: Among[the] stiff, old, broken branch[es and] bright green [leaves] of [the tree] again come sweet white [blossoms of] May.

Ezra Pound was right as always when he told Williams in 1917, "The thing that saves your work is *opacity*, and don't you forget it." His remark applies precisely as he intended it to "The Locust Tree," for there it stands without metaphysics, without mythology, without tendentious symbolizing. But opaque, too, in a way Ezra didn't intend: the way it solicits the reader's attention to words as words (Among *of*?), to the poem as thing. Like the Juan Gris painting of a rose he so admired, Williams's "Locust Tree" stands in apposition to nature, emphatically separated from it. Though first published (in this version) in 1934, it would not look out of place in the landscape of *Spring and All* (1923), a territory colonized by the Objectivists in the early thirties and the writers of "projective" or "open" verse in the fifties.

To Pound, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Olson, and Williams himself we are indebted for what we know of "The Locust Tree" as machine. They neglected to tell us, or tell us only darkly, of the ghost in the machine. The ghost has his book at last, in David Walker's fine study. Walker brings to our attention the peculiar "transparency" of Williams's opacity. By dispensing with an identifiable speaker in "The Locust Tree," by fracturing its syntax, by omitting punctuation and even significant words, Williams invites the reader into the poem to help determine its meaning. The reader thereby usurps the role conventionally played by the persona in the dramatic monologue or lyric, becoming himself the center of dramatic interest. At the same time, he cannot help but notice the extent to which his role has been defined for him by the poet; this "double consciousness" locates him simultaneously inside the poem, as participant, and outside the poem, as voyeur.

In the two chapters Walker devotes to Williams, he makes a persuasive case for the "transparent lyric" as a distinctive bridge between Symbolism and the anti-Symbolist "poetics of indeterminacy" which Marjorie Perloff has traced from Rimbaud through John Ashbery, John Cage, and David Antin. One sees with new clarity the principles underlying movements as diverse as

Imagism, Vorticism, and Objectivism. So tactfully, so modestly does Walker develop his thesis that neither the traditional critic nor the deconstructionist is apt to take offense, and along the way he offers especially satisfying readings of such poems as "The Sea," "The Sea-Elephant," and "Chloe."

I cannot muster the same enthusiasm for the four chapters devoted to Wallace Stevens, though these manifest the same finesse and include first-rate discussions of poems like "The Motive for Metaphor," "Someone Puts a Pineapple Together," and "Study of Images II." Compared with Williams's more experimental poems, Stevens's are heavily armored, leaving few syntactic chinks through which the reader can enter. Their "transparency" is therefore largely a function of their "impersonality." Not surprisingly, Walker concentrates on Stevens's later poems rather than the earlier pieces, which more often employ dramatis personae.

Like "determinate," "dramatic" is for Walker a relative term, and few will quarrel with his assertion that the Stevens poems he selects are relatively undramatic in the conventional sense: they do not embody the speaking voice in a fully realized persona. Yet the reader is unlikely, I think, to mistake Stevens's meditating consciousness for his own, so idiosyncratic is the diction, imagery, and syntax of the least "personal" of these poems. "The Snow Man" is a case in point: according to Walker, this poem "requires the reader to *enter* the snow man, to become 'nothing himself' and look out at a blank world through crystalline eyes" (p. 17). This he can do, Walker maintains, because there is no dramatized "I" to inhibit identification with the snow man. But there is such an "I," and he effectively diverts my attention from the scene's nothingness to the possibilities latent in "shagged" junipers and the sound of misery in the wind. He does so, in fact, against my better judgment, since I prefer the snow man's objectivity (though not his nothingness) to the speaker's facile anthropomorphism.

A corollary of Walker's thesis, never fully elaborated, is that critics generally misread the poems of Stevens and Williams from an uncritical allegiance to the "expressive" theory of literature—namely, that the work dramatizes some facet of its author's inner life. The transparent lyricist has neither a self to express (the Romantics) nor a medium (Eliot); rather, he seeks to put the reader directly in touch with the phenomenal world or the contours of thought, without interference from his own personality. Thus a Stevens poem which seems to express Stevens's personal uncertainty is actually calculated to "establish a dialectical network, deliberately unresolved, which it is up to the reader to fulfill" (p. 76). Plausible as this sounds, it doesn't circumvent the expressive theory. I am persuaded merely that Stevens has devised an oblique, stylistically ingenious way to communicate an uncertainty that was once his own. To the transparent lyric as to the conventional dramatic lyric Horace's version of the expressive theory still applies: no tears in the writer, no tears in the reader.

These reservations aside, I can recommend David Walker's *The Transparent Lyric* both to students of the two poets whose work he discusses and to those interested in modern poetic theory. The book demonstrates how much a sensitive critic can accomplish when armed, as Walker's preface has it, "with no more theoretical ammunition than . . . imagination and common sense" (p. ix). Add to these what Emerson calls "excitement," and one has the com-

bination to be seen everywhere in this book, through Walker's transparently readable prose.

Marquette University Milton J. Bates

Quixote Scriptures: Essays on the Textuality of Hispanic Literature by Elias L. Rivers. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, Pp. 164. $17.50.

The five chapters of Rivers's book are elegant and perceptive analyses of various stages in the development of the Hispanic literary tradition as viewed from the point of view of the concept of "textuality." Although Rivers never defines the terms in any metacritically adequate sense, it is obvious that he is not using it in any loose sense to refer to the "uniqueness" or "originality" or "creative exemplariness" that serves as the controlling point of reference for standard manuals of literary history. Rather, for Rivers "textuality" means the unquestionably theoretical issue of the complex array of strategies whereby literary discourse (itself a complex social, artistic, and ideologically marked phenomenon) is embedded in or circumscribed by textual artificats. River's metaphoric title underscores the thrust of his analysis: literary art in a Western tradition like the Hispanic, despite the vast array of competing "reality effects," is essentially a scriptural phenomenon. That is, literature is an act of writing, and the modalities of writing—their ideologies and their conventions—are, in this conception of critical analysis, more fundamentally the basis for literary history than the study of themes, generic categories, or the expressive (societal vs. individual) functions of individual texts.

The last chapter, "Spanish in a New World: An Epilogue," touches only on a few examples that could serve as the basis for an examination of the textuality of Latin American literature (one that would surely be far more complex than any such history for Spain because of the competing national and regional divisions of the almost useless generalization of "Latin America"). The truly solid contribution of Rivers's book lies in the five main chapters. "The Spread of Alphabetic Culture: An Introduction" speaks of the various literary, cultural, religious, and—above all else—linguistic traditions in the Peninsula. "The Beginnings of the Spanish Tradition" surveys the basic forms of Medieval literature in terms of the emergence of Castillian as the official literary and cultural dialect of the Spanish tradition and against the backdrop of the textual modalities of the key literary documents of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. The importance of classical and French influences, the dialectical relationship between spoken vs. written registers, and the development of hypotactic from paratactic style are essential points of reference for analyzing textuality. Although these issues are often to be found in standard literary histories, where they become exciting new critical perspectives for Rivers is, precisely, the way in which they can be integrated into a semiotic model of textuality.

The three Renaissance/Golden Age chapters likewise deal with the great masters of what is considered the most original segment of Spanish literature, again from the point of view of the aforementioned concept of textual-

ity: "Renaissance Experiments" (the *Celestina*, Garcilaso de la Vega, Luis de León, Juan Valdés, among others, with emphasis on the formation of the standard literary language of Spain), "Baroque Age of Gold" (the dramas of Lope de Vega and the poetic war of Góngora vs. Quevedo), and "Cervantine Dialectic" (Cervantes as the inevitable culminating point of reference).

The importance of Rivers's discussions of these works in the context of a well articulated critical theory is that essentially a new model for studying the literary history of Spain is proposed. After two decades in which Hispanic scholars have generally been concerned with microcommentaries—applying to individual works various new critical approaches—Rivers's book pulls together critical insights from one perspective of these microcommentaries, that of textuality. The result is that three complimentary audiences are implicitly addressed by *Quixotic Scriptures*: specialists in Hispanic literary scholarship who are familiar with the facts that Rivers recites but who have not been accustumed to integrating them in terms of the theoretical concept of textuality; students of Spanish literature who sorely need a historical overview of major texts from a point of view that is continuous with the microcommentaries to be found in the specialized journals when the student turns from survey to monographic courses (the standard works available in English are examples of literary historiography quite disconsonant with modern critical theory); nonspecialist readers who can only derive a greater respect for Spanish literature surveyed in terms of a mature critical discourse.

Written in the tradition of synthesis of Erich Auerbach, Karl Vossler, Ramón Menendéz Pidal, and Otis Green, *Quixotic Scriptures* is marred only by the author's regrettable decision to eschew the standards of scholarly documentation. Thus, the reader will find it difficult to pursue through footnotes the sources of some of Rivers's assertions, general matters of theoretical underpinning, and the interrelations between his analyses and those of other scholars with whom his comments are in both agreement and disagreement. I find the rendering of San Isidoro in English as Saint Isadore of Seville curious.

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On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature by Geoffrey Galt Harpham. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982. Pp. xxiii + 230. $22.50.

After one has taken stock of the mass of ideas and information on the grotesque which this book provides, one asks oneself, as one does whenever an academic work seems to transcend itself: what is it really after? Or, at least, what is the motivation, either deliberate or unconscious, behind it? (As Harpham himself puts it, "Stories begin with something that means too much"). I think it no accident that Flannery O'Connor figures prominently in Harpham's Conclusion, and that some of his most telling insights occur in the pages devoted to that author. Perhaps, as in O'Connor, there is in this book, too, "something to see, some connection between the apparent or the refer-

ential story, which may amuse or appall, and a shadow-story mysteriously inhering in the apparent one" (pp. 186–187). Harpham remarks that if O'Connor's characters "pursue the invisible with carnal eyes, they may be grotesque, but they are nonetheless saved" (p. 186). Salvation for O'Connor is "constant and universal" (p. 188); it is not so much grasped directly as acknowledged within the imperfect, which is all we can know. Even the good is grotesque (p. 188). "The goal is beyond the grotesque, but once you have arrived at the grotesque, you have also arrived at the goal" (pp. 188–189). If some sort of eschatology lurks in the grotesque, possibly it also underlies a preoccupation with the grotesque.

At any rate, if there be some obscurely funded spiritual impulse, perhaps in the tradition of the Pseudo-Dionysius, behind this work, it certainly does not interfere with the book's scholarly business. The first half deals primarily with art, the second with literature: the artistic examples are, for the most part, pre-Baroque; part II moves forward with chapters on Poe, Emily Brontë, Conrad, and Mann. The book is well illustrated; it combines abundant historical material with a steady application to theoretical questions relative to the grotesque, such as liminality, disorder, contradiction, periphery vs. center, and the role of the disgusting in art. When, for instance, Harpham explores the ways in which the organic and the mental, or the anguished and the objective (p. 120), interpenetrate in Poe (pp. 112–113), he is aware of debates in recent linguistic theory over comparable issues, such as the interaction of speech with the dead letters of phonetic alphabets (p. 119). But, although Harpham quotes Derrida extensively, he does not cite the apposite passages on framing and on the loathsome in Derrida's discussions of Kant (cf. Mark Krupnick, ed., *Displacement: Derrida and After* [Bloomington, Indiana U.P., 1983], pp. 43–46, "Grotesquerie"); Buckminster Fuller's inside-outside models would also have some relevance for Harpham's argument. I understand that this volume will pave the way for Harpham's next project, which investigates some major issues in medieval religion, such as asceticism and temptation, in relation to modern philosophy and language theory (Bakhtin, Wittgenstein). If it is of the same quality as this book, it will be well worth waiting for.

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Three Sad Races: Racial Identity and National Consciousness in Brazilian Literature by David T. Haberly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Pp. 198. $24.95.

The question of national consciousness haunts the literatures and thought of emerging and/or powerless nations; self-definition articulates what a nation sees as distinctive and particularly valuable in itself, and prepares from within the face it will present for the recognition of the outside world. American literature and criticism of the early nineteenth century, for instance, are full of this preoccupation with self-definition and self-assertion, a subject which has now retreated from the mainstream to persist in the stronger and

more vital pockets of its regional and so-called ethnic literatures. But the question is still alive in much of the best literature of the Third World, and Haberly sees it as central to the entire history of Brazilian literature, where its most insistent affirmation is that Brazilian culture is exemplary and unique in having achieved and in valuing racial harmony.

The title chosen for the book expresses the centrality of the racial component in Brazilian self-definition and evaluation not only in its wording but also in its origin: "three sad races" comes from a widely anthologized poem by a most proper and unadventurous poet, assigned in schools as expressive of a truth about Brazilian identity: "loving bloom of three sad races." In the Introduction, a clear, accurate, and dispassionate analysis of the facts and ideology in the history of the contact between races in Brazil, Haberly invites his American readers to take an imaginative leap out of the cultural matrix in which they live, and to conceive of a different definition of race from that which they take for granted. He asks them to imagine not a fixed classification of people into discrete racial categories, but a racial continuum, forming a system in which "the racial identity of any individual—his or her position on the continuum—is not necessarily fixed and immutable . . . but is constantly redefined by the perceptions of others, perceptions that can vary greatly from region to region and within different social settings" (p. 3).

This special nature of race relations in Brazil, and the consciousness of its uniqueness among Brazilians is the first principle Haberly posits as a basis for his analysis of the continuity and coherence in Brazilian literary history. The second is unexpected, for it considers the place of the literary profession within the culture: literature is one of the possible "escape hatches" that allow movement along the social and racial continuum, effecting, as needed, a lightening of the skin or a deepening of the soul. Thus armed, Haberly can deal effectively not only with the history of Brazilian literature and with its traditional function as a vehicle for the expression of national character and aspirations, but also with individual writers and works. His approach yields good results when applied to writers on any point of the racial continuum: it can explain the logic that makes the white Castro Alves and his readers identify with the plight of black slaves and that which makes the mulatto Machado de Assis weave the social disadvantages of his color into his work so indirectly as to allow readers and critics not to see them. It can explain the logic of Conçalves Dias's "Song of Exile," perhaps the best-known of all Brazilian poems, as expressing the alienation of a son of all three "sad" races in so compelling and acceptable a form that parts of it were incorporated into the national anthem, where "sadness" has no place; and it can find the congruence between the ethereal white forms and the subjacent violence of the poems by the great (black) symbolist poet Cruz e Sousa.

The initial chapter tracing the course of Brazilian literature during colonial times, as well as the chapters on the poets Gonçalves Dias and Castro Alves, and the novelist José de Alencar are acute and concisely informative, providing enough background to show that the greatest Brazilian writers are not sudden blooms in a desert and that the themes of race and national consciousness are present and important from the very beginning of Brazilian times. These chapters also offer, like the rest of the book, an extra pleasure in Haberly's translations, which are presented to illustrate specific theoretical

observations but turn out to be little literary gems in themselves, apt at finding the English equivalents to typically Brazilian meanings and Portuguese linguistic tricks, and particularly good at staying close to the feel of Romantic poetry without becoming cloying. The translations of Cruz e Sousa are not only good, but also especially useful: the poet has never been studied, in Brazil, with the attention he deserves, and one can hope that his works will now gain new readers.

The chapter on Cruz e Sousa is probably the most original and useful in the book, partly because, although the poet is regularly anthologized and hailed (it is an ironic situation) as the greatest Brazilian representative of the French symbolist school, very little serious criticism has been written about him and Haberly's intelligent analysis is a major contribution to it, even if it indicates that under certain circumstances, the "escape hatch" may jam. But it is in the chapters on Machado de Assis and Mário de Andrade, more widely studied authors, that the power of Haberly's approach is most clearly displayed.

Haberly generalizes from national to personal identity, and connects the common Brazilian self-definition as a mixed people with Machado's problem-ridden view of his own place, given his mixed ancestry, in Brazilian society—a society whose tolerance toward partially non-white individuals is less pronounced than its pride in generalized racial tolerance would lead one to expect. Thus he accounts, convincingly, for many of the indeterminacies in Machado's fiction, which traditional criticism tends to explain in terms of purely psychological categories like "subtlety" or, if sociologically inclined, in terms of concepts like the inconsistencies of bourgeois ideology.

Haberly also finds original sense in some of the central images of Mário de Andrade's poetry and of his great prose poem *Macunaima.* Other critics have written on the recurrent figure of the harlequin in Mário's work, but even the more authoritative skirt the implication that the colors in the figure's costume, significantly juxtaposed, rather than mixed, might have specifically racial and not just generally psychological connotations. Indiscreetly, Haberly says what Brazilians usually only hint at when they publish a photo of Mário de Andrade in most editions of his work: that he not only contributed to the Brazilian literature of racial identity as part of the discourse on national consciousness, but that he did it from the perspective of his own mixed ancestry.

Though fruitful and enlightening, Haberly's approach does raise a few questions. After having traced the consistent historical discrepancy between one of the central tenets of Brazilian national consciousness and Brazilian social realities, and the effect of that discrepancy on the lives and works of the nation's greatest writers, Haberly concludes somberly that alienation is the hallmark and only authentic position of the great Brazilian writers. The observation is apposite, but one should also remember that apart from the Arcadians of the late eighteenth century, all the greatest Brazilian writers—and certainly all those writing after colonial times—produced their work after Romanticism, for various historical and sociological reasons, had made alienation into an inescapable idiom of their craft. It is possible, of course, that the specifically racial component of that alienation makes it unique and qualitatively different from what is expressed in other Romantic or modernist works. With good reason, Haberly makes no such claim which would, at its

limit, make of the difference between Brazilian and North American definitions of race a mere index of Brazilian failure.

The considerations above lead to a further question: given that both Machado de Assis and Mário de Andrade chose to keep a pointed silence on the matter of their own race, what critical attitude is most respectful of their genius and faithful to their works? Traditionally, Brazilian critics have followed the writers' leads and thus helped perpetuate and keep invisible the mythical, not to say dishonest, component of the Brazilian ideology of racial tolerance. Haberly's approach does greater justice to more of the contents of their works, but also robs them of some of the universality they had so dearly bought with their—culturally coherent—silence. This might be just a pseudo-dilemma, solved by stating that Haberly simply provides a corrective to traditional critical mystification, if his study were not inserted in its own cultural context, and had not found one kind of intelligibility in Brazilian literature that makes it more easily accessible to a differently race-conscious American public for which it should be difficult to read an author of mixed ancestry, from a Third-World country as a racially unmarked spokesman for the condition of men like themselves, members of a culture of equivalent value. His dissection of the ideology of racial tolerance is valid, but does not acknowledge that ideology is not an innocent word either: it implies a lie, and invites demythification so insistently that one forgets that it also points to a form of reality, and that it has a teleological dimension: Brazil would like to be as tolerant as it says it is, and sometimes it acts in the direction of that desire. In short, when he makes racial consciousness the central concept of his analysis, Haberly chooses a strong tool which makes it possible for him to discern the roots of the subtleties, and explain the mysteries and inconsistencies, of even the greatest of Brazilian writers. But the very consistency and cohesiveness of his analysis enjoins it from taking into consideration the way in which the particular attitude of Brazilian culture toward race broadened the scope of its authors, making the specific form of their alienation central to its self-definition, and thus reintegrating their separateness.

Thus Haberly's book has the additional, if probably unsought-for merit of reproducing in its very structure the dilemma of self-definition in emerging and/or powerless nations: that of being forced to adopt a language which deflects the account of its defining characteristics in the direction of meanings acceptable and intelligible by outside observers, if it is to make itself known and less misunderstood.

If the above are strictures, they are of the sort that could only be made against a critical work that is itself solid, thoughtful, coherent and, within its self-chosen limits, complete. Haberly's is the rare study of a little-known literature that does not get lost in details, that speaks to the beginner without condescension, and to the expert with originality, that is informative and thorough, and that also opens the way for further, serious, discussions.

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