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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

*The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* by James Engell.  
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981. Pp. xix + 416. \$16.00.

This book is a study of the history of the idea of imagination from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century in England, Scotland, and Germany. The British thinkers range from Hobbes to Coleridge, and the German from Leibniz to Schelling. There is a cursory glance at a few American writers of this time, but writers of the French enlightenment are omitted because they "did not originate or develop the idea of the imagination in the same fashion nor to the same extent" (ix-x) as writers in England, Scotland, and Germany.

I wish to begin this review with a discussion of the last chapter, entitled "Coleridge." This is the climax of the book, and all that precedes leads to it. Indeed, Coleridge the writer and thinker makes "imagination" a central concept and Engell does justice to the various meanings this idea has for Coleridge; he reveals the limitations of this idea and how Coleridge came to see some of its dangers as a substitute for religion. Engell relates Coleridge's views of imagination as these came to embrace subsidiary ideas and he traces the decline of this concept in the last fifteen years of Coleridge's life, years in which he tried "to reconcile the Dynamic Philosophy with traditional Christianity." This exposition is one of the best we have of Coleridge on imagination. It is a model of what the book could have been.

This is an ambitious work; certainly we have no study of the subject that is as detailed. Nor do we have any modern work that makes such claims for the idea of imagination itself: "During the eighteenth century the effort to define—to create—an idea of the imagination permitted and encouraged a critical survey of the entire creative process and of the history of literature and the arts. Such an opportunity was unprecedented. The immediate result was that the creative imagination emerged as the central value of the late eighteenth century and of Romanticism" (vii). Imagination, writes Engell at the conclusion of his Preface, "is now considered, without question, the supreme value of art and literature" (x). Such a generalization seems more than the evidence warrants, especially since the very idea of the imagination as it presently exists is held to be inadequate. Edward S. Casey writes in *Imagining* (1976), "It is above all in existing theories of imagination that one finds the most telling instances of failure to distinguish between imagining and other sorts of mental acts, a failure based on an underlying descriptive inadequacy."

Engell may inflate the idea of imagination in our time, but he is surely right in arguing that imagination was one of the central concepts used to explain the creation of literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His study deserves careful scrutiny both as a reference work for statements about the imagination and as a history of an idea. Considering the knowledge

the author commands of his subject and the writing and thinking of which he is capable, I am disappointed to find the book marred by two serious flaws. The first is the use of selective citation to make his case, and the second is a progressive or additive view of history. These are flaws that repeatedly call into question the adequacy of the history Engell tells.

(1) *Selective Citation*. One of the most valuable contributions *The Creative Imagination* makes is in its presentation of an immense body of statements about the subject, including a considerable number by German theorists, who are introduced as significant figures and studied in detail. Still, the quotations that are given from British critics, for example, do raise doubts about the interpretations and conclusions drawn from them. Such doubts arise from interpretations of the evidence that are frequently unsupported, sometimes resulting in contradictory statements; the quotations often prove to be partial statements which when examined in context provide qualifications that are omitted; the references to poems and prose are made without attending to the functions of the different forms of writing.

With regard to unsupported statements that can lead to contradictions, consider the following two sentences in the text: "Hume keeps the faculty of judgment outside the sphere of imagination. Imagination may produce fictions or beliefs, but even beliefs are of a lower surety than 'ideas of the judgment'" (55). And the sentence in which Hume is claimed to support the belief that the imagination alone creates our picture of reality: "Berkeley's belief that the mind alone creates reality appealed to Blake, and although opposed to Blake and Berkeley in other respects, Hume had said essentially the same thing: the imagination alone creates our picture of reality" (247). This is not only a mistake about Hume's position, but it appears to be based on Hume's "Dissertation on the Passions" (1757), which was a watered down version of Book II of the *Treatise* and which is not a work on epistemology or the nature of reality. Or consider the statement that "no major author before the Romantics is more concerned with the imagination or devotes to the subject a larger share of his work than Johnson in his writing on human nature. He especially probes the human imagination in the ten years from *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) through the essays in the *Rambler*, *Adventurer*, and *Idler* to *Rasselas* (1759)" (58). But Johnson does not set this as his aim, not even in *Rasselas*; and Engell's example of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* may stand as an instance of interpreting evidence to suit his argument: "The theme of Johnson's poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and of most of his moral essays is the necessary and constant cleansing and rectifying of the 'hunger of imagination' through reason, religion, and the stability of fact" (61). But surely this reworking of Juvenal into the Christian tradition of belief, discipline, and self-denial is not a study of the "imagination."

I do not believe any deliberate distortion is involved in this claim, but I do think it is an effort to show that imagination was central to writers who primarily analyzed its dangers, as Johnson did in *Rasselas*. This bias probably accounts for the omissions in quotations that would qualify the statement Engell makes. He twice quotes the opening of *Rambler* 60, the first time saying, "Charity or compasion would not be possible without imagination" (61): and later

The idea of imaginative sympathy struck home even to Johnson, usually wary of the imagination as a guide. In *Rambler* 60 (October 13, 1750), he makes a sweeping assertion: "All joy or sorrow for the happiness or calamities of others is produced by an act of the imagination, that realizes the event...by placing us, for a time, in the condition of him whose fortune we contemplate; so that we feel...whatever emotions would be excited by the same good or evil happening to ourselves." (149)

But if one puts in what the ellipses omit, it becomes apparent that Johnson (in *Rambler* 60, which deals with biography) is discussing responses to narratives: "All joy or sorrow for the happiness or calamities of others is produced by an act of the imagination, that realises the event however *fictitious*, or *approximates it however remote*, by placing us, for a time, in the condition of him whose fortune we contemplate; so that we feel, while the deception lasts, whatever emotions would be excited by the same good or evil happening to ourselves" (my italics). Johnson is urging that biographical writing deal with those events that can be readily adopted by readers because by doing so "we can more readily adopt the pain or pleasure proposed to our minds, by recognising them as once our own, or considering them as naturally incident to our state of life."

The selective use of citations, while understandable, does give a false picture of what the cited critic is saying. For example, the author quotes a passage from Burke's essay "On Taste" in the second edition of the *Inquiry* which begins, "The mind of man possesses a sort of creative power of its own..." and precedes it with the remark that the imagination "has a power to reorder experience and to cast nature in a new mould" (71). But in unquoted sentences from the same passage Burke says just the opposite, that "it must be observed, that the power of the imagination is incapable of producing anything absolutely new; it can only vary the disposition of those ideas it has received from the senses."

These are representative instances, but they do raise questions about the interpretations of the citations, which seem to be selected by the premise of history as progression. I give one final example: in his discussion of Shelley, Engell writes, "Poetry, says Shelley in the *Defence*, 'acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness.' The poet becomes an instrument of a higher melody" (261). But regardless of what Shelley may say elsewhere, this quotation refers to unappreciated poetry in the infancy of the world which gets to be appreciated by future generations. The full quotation is as follows:

In the infancy of the world, neither poets themselves nor their auditors are fully aware of the excellence of poetry: for it acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness; and it is reserved for future generations to contemplate and measure the mighty cause and effect in all the strength and splendour of their union.

One of the dangers in tracing the history of an idea is the temptation to disregard the contexts in which the idea appears. It is a temptation that can be, but is not always, resisted. The author finds, for example, that *The*

*Prelude* does not say much more, philosophically or critically, about the imagination than Akenside's *Pleasure of the Imagination*, a poem based on Addison's *Spectator* papers on this subject.

*The Prelude* is a vindication of the attitude that imagination permeates life. And without this personal testament we would miss a closing link in this history of the idea. *The Prelude* does not, in a specifically philosophical or critical sense, say much more about the idea of the imagination than Akenside's *Pleasures*. But the individuality and the connected experiences in *The Prelude* are among the reasons why it is far greater. The idea becomes humanized. (266)

Here is an instance in which the author's interest in the history of an idea seems to mislead him about the two different kinds of poetry, between a didactic poem and an autobiographical narrative. Is it not reasonable to assume that the "philosophy" of poetry exists in its form as well as in its overt discourse and that different forms imply concepts that need to be discriminated despite the similarities they share with other texts?

(2) *Engell's Concept of History*. It may well be that one of the reasons the author does not recognize this difference is that he considers the history of imagination to be additive or progressive. In his Preface he puts it this way: "As an idea, the imagination grew by constant additions; each important figure in the adventure of this idea read scores of other writers. Yet there was a continual sense of affirmation, of preserving and not denying what had been stated before, and then enlarging on it" (vii). The consequence of this view of history is that Engell argues for a consistent and continuous development of the idea of "imagination" from Hobbes, Locke, and Leibniz to Coleridge, and minimizes or disregards the resistance to particular positions. It would be difficult from this history to grasp the differences between Locke and Leibniz and to know that Kant opposed both empiricism and rationalism and sought a synthesis that was a significant recasting of these positions.

Engell is not unaware of discontinuities in the idea of the imagination. But this realization does not lead him to change the kind of history he writes. In fact, it constitutes a kind of self-conscious afterthought.

In the end, too, we must realize our tendency to look at remarks on the imagination for a clarifying and simplifying statement. We find dead-ends, labyrinths, and mazes. The vocabulary becomes unsteady, the definitions weak and unstable. But there is also a bright side to this situation. If nothing else, the confusion and the struggles of the best thinkers and writers of the Enlightenment and the Romantic period indicate what a powerful, complex, and subtle force the imagination is. (136)

This statement could have formed the basis of a history of the imagination that would have provided a more acute understanding of this concept than is actually offered. This is unfortunate since Engell has done more work on this idea than anyone else who has written about the Enlightenment. But he has not seriously confronted what this passage means in terms of a history as progress. If he had, his history would have taken account not merely of

additions but of dead ends as well, not merely progress but "the confusion and struggles of the best thinkers and writers of the Enlightenment and the Romantic period" showing "what a powerful, complex, and subtle force the imagination is."

Engell makes amply clear what different, even contradictory, meanings were given to "imagination," both in Britain and Germany. But he does not write his history in terms of the problems particular philosophers were seeking to solve and what part imagination played in their inquiries. Rather, he proceeds by analyzing what they said only about imagination—with some exceptions such as Schelling and Coleridge. For this reason, even when he writes of philosophers like Leibniz and Locke, both are seen as developers of the imagination, and he gives Hobbes the position of initiator. This distorted view of philosophical history is especially obvious in the discussion of Kant: "For on the nature of imagination, Kant stands largely on the shoulders of Tetens [Johann Nicolaus Tetens (1736-1807)]..." (118).

Mr. Engell sees no pronounced break between the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with regard to theories of the imagination. He persuasively links "associations of ideas," "sympathy," "genius" to imagination, and, in doing so, displays a command of ideas in the period. But here, again, his history is not clear about how or why such interconnections exist. He wishes to date certain facets of the idea of imagination from mid-century though he is not always precise about dates. On page 151 he writes, "Now, starting in the 1760s and 1770s, the poet's sympathetic power began to be seen as an adjunct of his imagination, and critical thinking increasingly explored this relationship." But on page 256 he finds that concepts of sympathy were explored ten years earlier: "Much of what Shelley says explicitly about the imagination is a ringing of the changes, in a high and impelling rhetorical mode, on ideas evolving and intertwining since Adam Smith and Alexander Gerard began to explore the concepts of sympathy and genius in the 1750s and 1760s." The 1770s are sometimes seen as the beginning of new ideas and sometimes as a plateau in which new ideas were not developed despite the fact that Britain and Germany in the last quarter of the eighteenth century were sharing ideas of the imagination: "From the early 1770s, half a dozen years before Tetens' *Philosophische Versuche* and almost ten years before Kant's first *Critique*, Herder stirred the currents of new ideas" (115). Later in the book, however, he declares, "But we should note that before the 1820s America, too, like England and Scotland from the late 1770s to the early 1790s, was on a plateau" (189).

My wish is not to show trivial discrepancies (who, after all, is guiltless of these) but to point out that Engell's view of history as progress, by neglecting oppositions or resistances or qualifications, leads to ambiguities in interpretation. Apparently the author does not subscribe to Frye's view of an "age of sensibility" or to period terms like "neoclassicism," but a developmental history ought not eliminate the possibility of distinguishing crucial changes from minor ones. Which additions to the ideas of imagination could be considered developments of a norm, which the overturning of a norm? Hobbes and Leibniz become crucial figures in this history, but

does Hume's view of the imagination derive from theirs? Indeed, the author's use of the terms "influence," "hints," "parallel" seems, at the very least, problematic.

As a result of emphasizing progression, Engell has to argue for continuity even when it does not exist—as witness the case of Johnson. And he has to minimize or reduce or ignore oppositions. Early in the book he declares, "The figure of Newton, as Wordsworth describes him 'Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone,' had become for many eighteenth-century thinkers a symbol not so much of reason but of the imagination" (127). But in noting that Blake attacks Newton, he declares, "Blake aims a heavy verbal artillery on the earlier eighteenth century, on Locke and Newton, but he finds few major enemies in English thought after the 1740s and 1750s when it comes to the idea of imagination" (248). But if Newton had become a symbol of imagination, Blake must be opposing this particular view. Blake and Wordsworth disagreed about the imagination, and no attempt is made to confront either the conflict or the kind of symbolic imagination Newton stood for.

Engell does describe different views of imagination, but his book lacks any attempt to show how history involves critics and philosophers and poets supporting, rejecting, or confronting one another. When Wordsworth—in the 1800 "Preface" and in the 1802 "Appendix"—attacks Gray and Johnson for their diction, he does so because the diction of poetry is in itself characteristic of certain ideas that he wishes to oppose. It seems reasonable to assume that Wordsworth does not share the view of imaginative language held by the earlier poets. In consequence of its view of history as progression, *The Creative Imagination* tends to reduce differences, to give a harmony to human actions that they do not possess.

A history that describes but does not analyze ideas leaves the reader with a vague notion of what different thinkers take the imagination to be. I have earlier criticized the selective citations, but I wish to indicate that without a sense of the loose usage of an idea, we can have only an inadequate sense of which of its aspects is undergoing development. Engell knows this; he is, however, more interested in tracing continuities than discontinuities. One of his procedures is to chart progress by showing that critics use similar terms. Referring to Blake, for example, he declares, "The universe is a construct of the imaginative power that is in both God and man, and when man realizes this, he has taken the first step to truth and salvation. Similar ideas appear in Akenside, Tucker, Thomas Brown, and Coleridge" (244). But such ideas are not couched in the language of Blake, nor do they form part of the same mythology, nor do they lead to the same kind of writing.

I have spent most of this review documenting the two major flaws, although I have also sought to make clear the extensive research the book contains. This research is most prominent in the German tradition that Engell outlines. The book as a whole is divided into six parts which proceed more or less chronologically: "Part One. Probing the Source," "Part Two. A Broader Stage," "Part Three. The German Foundation," "Part Four. Faith in

the Imagination," "Part Five. Literary Explorations," "Part Six. Harmony of Being." In the last part, which contains discussions of Schelling and Coleridge, we find the most rewarding sections.

Coleridge's view of the imagination is described as follows:

The imagination, as it integrates the whole mind, is "an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive," influencing and influenced by each faculty simultaneously. Then, by translating all mental activity into images or symbols, the imagination produces language that contains the whole potential or "potentized" mind. The understanding grasps this language and uses it for communication. Without our imagination-created language, we are defeated and lost—bereft, as Hobbes said, of civilization. (399)

Coleridge was immersed in the imagination as power, and Engell shows how Coleridge stepped back from the implications of the Godlike role he attributed to it. But how much of Coleridge's view is appropriate as an analysis of imagination? How adequate is his description of the mind's creative act? Is our consciousness, our writing, a result of "one organic and harmonious process" (339)? Do not our epiphanic moments occur outside the harmony that Coleridge posited? Is his description adequate to explain the interrelation between individual and communal imaginative acts?

Engell is right in assuming that Blake, Coleridge, and Shelley identified "imagination" with all creative acts. But were they correct in doing so? Of course, if one writes of the "creative imagination," it is not identical with declaring that the imagination is creative. And Engell acknowledges the "uncreative" views of the imagination. But what precisely are the "creative" functions of the imagination with respect to learning, speaking, thinking?

Such questions arise because Engell's work is so wide-ranging and provocative. In opening up the German tradition in the history of an idea, he has made it possible for scholars to do in detail for minor writers what he has done for Coleridge. In this sense, the work ought to call forth new scholarship. It is bound to serve as a valuable reference work for those who study the eighteenth-century and Romantic imagination. It illustrates the pervasiveness and interconnectedness of imagination with other ideas. But as a history, it will need to be reimagined. The chapter on Coleridge stands as a model of what such reimagining might be.

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*Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson* by Richard S. Peterson. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981. Pp. xxi + 247. \$18.50.

Richard S. Peterson has produced a well-turned study to which Jonson scholars will not only turn but also return for some years. They will return to reconsider his theory of humanist and Jonsonian imitation for



writing and for living, to learn from his additional supply of Jonson's sources and analogues, and to enjoy his perceptive, intricate, and learned readings of Jonson's laudatory poetry and his suggested interpretations of Jonson's other works. Moreover they will recommend that their colleagues and students turn to Peterson's study to enjoy watching two interesting minds at work—Jonson creating by transforming the past and Peterson recreating by recovering that tradition. For Peterson's major task is inventing (perhaps in our sense, certainly in the Renaissance rhetoricians' sense) a context in which to read Jonson and other classically and morally based poets.

To engage his study Peterson has focussed on Jonson's imitation—not on the familiar translation or adaptation, allusion or echo, genre or topos, diction or syntax, rhythm or scheme, but rather on the metaphoric and moral development of art and life. Peterson assumes, with no inconsiderable number of examples, that metaphors in a very physical sense do inform poetry and can shape lives. Thus in his study of Jonson's poems of praise those honored and addressed take shapes that are then moralized—William Roe as an alembic, Sir Thomas Roe as a column, Sir Kenelm Digby as a palace, Venetia Digby as a temple, Sir William Uvedale as a cabinet, Sir Henry Morison and Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland as the dioscuroi, Shakespeare as a lance, and even Ben Jonson himself as a vase. Such metaphors, through connotations and puns, carry tremendously greater complexity and suggestiveness than new images. For Jonson turned such metaphors out, according to Peterson, by reading, assimilating, and recreating them, by excavating, digesting, and transforming them from classical masterworks into seventeenth-century poems of praise. Peterson's thesis, then, is that Jonson wrote by rediscovering and reinventing the witty metaphors latent in and repeatedly refined through literature of the past, and by applying these complex witty metaphors to subjects in the present so as to restore and expand both metaphors and the human moral potential they honor and communicate. Moreover, both the Renaissance poet and his twentieth-century critic would seem to maintain that such activity makes the classics, and indeed the literature and life of any era, worthwhile.

To further focus his study Peterson has concentrated on Jonson's poems of praise—on *laus* rather than on the satiric *vituperatio* more often discussed by students of Jonson's idea of imitation and lyrics. Nor does Peterson deal with all the poems of praise. Instead, first he outlines Jonson's general theory inside the context of other Renaissance theories of imitation and describes Jonson's aesthetics and moral practice of imitation by interpreting Jonson's theory through pronouncements, masques, and plays, as well as poems, suggesting all along full readings of short poems addressed to Camden, the Roes, Digbys, Rutlands, and others. Next he presents intensive and extensive paradigmatic readings of "An Epistle Answering to One that Asked to Be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben," "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And What He Hath Left Us," and "To the Immortall Memorie, and Friendship of that Noble Paire, Sir Lucius Cary, and Sir H. Morison." Peterson's evidence and his mode of

operating call to mind Rosemond Tuve and D. C. Allen—but with additions. Besides tracing image clusters through classical poems, emblem books, contemporary literature, and Jonson's own works, he also traces them through the works of moral philosophy. Thus Peterson is likely to cite an image in varying forms and interpretations in Plato, Cicero, Plutarch, Quintilian, Ausonius, and Macrobius, as well as in Horace, Seneca, Martial, and Juvenal, in Bacon as well as in emblem writers and major and minor Renaissance poets. Here we might like to have more contemporary support from Renaissance dictionaries, commentaries, and editions.

Beyond interpreting the poem itself in its tradition, Peterson extends the moral implications of the image patterns through Jonson's aesthetics and the ideal life he tried to promote. Thus Peterson's readings become readings of an ideal moral stance for a particular society as well as of individual poems, a genre, and an aesthetic stance. Here we might like to learn more about Jonson's relationship to the actual people and society he addresses. But both of his extensions of metaphorical readings of lyrics make Peterson's work all the more valuable—as a study of Jonson's poems of praise and as a model for other influence studies to come.

With learning and insight Peterson has also wittily and gracefully returned to Jonson and Jonson's sources to shape his own well-turned study on the complex metaphorical design underlying Jonson's sense of the classical ode. The turn, the counter-turn which completes the circle, and the stand, along with the complex web of connotations and puns these suggest, carry into Peterson's design and style, endowing it with an elegant formal structure and making it a persuasive exemplum of the very metaphors he is considering.

In brief, Richard S. Peterson's important new study of Jonson's verse offers scholars valuable new sources for Jonson's poetry; more, it offers splendid if occasionally overwrought interpretations of a number of central Jonson poems and still more suggestions about how to read many Jonson works in a new context of imitation for writing and for living; most, it offers an extended model for influence studies which moves far beyond formal patterns to social concerns and ethical positions. In closing Peterson's volume we might like very much to see a greater synthesis accounting for other patterns and arguments besides metaphorical ones and including satiric epigrams as well as paeans inside epideictic; we might even want a *summa* accounting for Jonson's whole monument of theory, poems, masques, and plays founded on his notion of imitation. But we can scarcely ask for a more informative, useful, or delightful study than Peterson's, to which the authors of any such syntheses will have to return to reread, digest and transform, and build upon.

IRA CLARK

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*English Dramatic Form, 1660-1800: An Essay in Generic History* by Laura Brown. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981. Pp. xvi + 240. \$19.50.

Brown's interesting and provocative essay addresses, as she says, both historical and conceptual problems. She traces the evolution of dramatic form in both serious and comic plays over a hundred-year period that witnessed major formal changes in drama, the decline of drama in the eighteenth century, and the concurrent rise of the novel.

Brown's conception of formal history is based largely on R. S. Crane's "Critical and Historical Principles of Literary History" (*The Idea of the Humanities* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967], II, 45-156). Unlike many recent critics of Restoration and eighteenth-century drama, Brown discerns both direction in the development of drama and shape in its history. She believes that "it is not only possible but essential to find a means of organizing and classifying" the drama of the period, and that this can best be done by examining major works, which "are more representative of their genre and of their period than minor or average works because they come closer to fulfilling the potential of their form. They grasp the realities of their age more fully, and they embody its concerns and contradictions more fully." The form of Restoration and eighteenth-century drama, Brown says, "can be most generally described as a coherent fiction." In more specific terms, "these plays are actions, constructed from the unfolding conflicts and relationships among characters whom we understand according to our evaluation of them in the terms of their represented fictional world." These actions can vary according to evaluative terms propounded, characters and conflicts represented, and relationships among "characters' deserts and fates." These conceptions of form and action, indebted to the work of Crane, Sheldon Sacks, and Ralph Rader, are thoroughly "neo-Aristotelian," but Brown's methodology depends on a further theoretical assumption that she says is less neo-Aristotelian—the idea that "literary form is ultimately imprinted with the ideology of the age." But this is not a major departure from neo-Aristotelian concepts of form. Central to Crane's definition of form, for example, is the notion that a literary work carries values or norms by which the worth of characters and actions are evaluated; it is a small additional step to trace those values to the ideology of a given age, and even that step is unnecessary when operative values are universal, which is the case with many values in eighteenth-century drama and some in Restoration drama. When they are local (tied, for instance, to a particular code of honor or social class), as more frequently happens in the Restoration, it is useful to trace them to specific ideological sources, although any coherent individual literary work contains values that are accessible without reference to an external ideology. Brown's manner of tying literary form to the ideology of its historical period, however, is very helpful in increasing our understanding of the broad issues of generic history in the Restoration and eighteenth century since the moral forms of the latter depend on bourgeois values that differ radically from the aristocratic values of Restoration social

forms. She is more concerned with the very general shift of values that took place between the Restoration and the mid-eighteenth century than with particular events of social or political history because the former ultimately tell us more about changes in generic history. And, as she says, these historical forces "appear only at the periphery" of her discussion and are subordinated to more strictly literary analysis.

Her analysis begins by defining formal categories based on examinations of individual plays, and her further analysis of the relationships among these categories forms the basis of her history of drama in the period. She demonstrates convincingly that serious and comic drama throughout the period, responding to the same historical forces, undergo parallel and related processes of formal change. Restoration audiences, for example, need not have been schizophrenic in responding to such apparently dissimilar plays as *The Conquest of Granada* and *The Country Wife* since they in some senses resemble each other more than the latter resembles an eighteenth-century comedy. Heroic action and dramatic social satire, the two major forms Brown identifies in the period from 1660 to 1677, are alike in that both base their actions on aristocratic social standards of assessment, the former on a precise honor code and the latter on contemporary genteel manners. Neither form is static within this period. Early heroic plays affirm the governing aristocratic code unambiguously, but later ones evince a "fragmentation" of the code or contain radical protagonists who violate it. Restoration dramatic social satire depends on the "discrepancy between the social assumptions that are expressed explicitly in the working out of the action and the dramatist's implicit moral position." There is a greater degree of discrepancy between the represented social context and the dramatist's implicit moral judgment in Wycherley than in Etherege, for example. Both forms, Brown argues, establish limits on options available to future playwrights by failing to provide alternatives to the status quo because of limited social scope, and by adopting dramatic assumptions that preclude complexity of character development.

The forms Brown identifies in the period from 1677 to 1707 are affective tragedy and transitional comedy. The defining characteristic of the former is its "dependence upon the audience's pitying response"; "action and meaning depend upon the affective power of the protagonist's plight." Hence pity replaces admiration. In transitional comedy, the social assessment of dramatic satire begins to be replaced by evaluations based on characters' inner moral worth. Brown argues that transitional comedy does not have a coherent form of its own since there can be no formal middle ground between social satire and moral action. The former assumes that audiences will examine critically what is presented on stage, whereas a moral action expresses directly the morality of its audience. Transitional comedy is "a coherent collection of individual responses or capitulations to the forces of generic change." Hence transitional comedy (Shadwell, Dufey, Southerne, Cibber, Vanbrugh, Congreve, Farquhar) arises from the "collision of two incompatible modes," often resulting in plays in which "social and moral are simply juxtaposed." A happy by-product of this collision is a freedom (exercised by Congreve and Vanbrugh) to experiment with complex characterization since the introduction of moral values eliminates

the need for social stereotypes on which satire depends and since the decreased emphasis on "manners" allows for psychological complexity in characterization. Hence *The Way of the World* "is uniquely representative of this transitional drama in its subtle definition of internal motivations and moral values in an aggressively social context."

The form that dominates the first half of the eighteenth century in both serious and comic drama is moral action, which directly represents and defines merit in terms of inner moral worth and assumes a direct identification between audience and protagonist. The form is implicitly or explicitly didactic and predominately sentimental and realistic. Brown argues that because of the "self-conscious continuity of dramatic evolution" (chiefly constraints of characterization and scope), dramatic moral action fails where novelistic moral action succeeds in surmounting the problem of "achieving a generative relationship between the moral merit of the exemplary [hence static] protagonist and the process of a dynamic action that produces his or her fate." Richardson overcomes the problem chiefly through psychological complexity, Fielding through social scope.

Brown remarks in her introduction that her task is the difficult one of "reconciling the details of individual texts with the process of literary evolution." One of the best ways to test the value of a generic history is to ask how useful it is in elucidating the individual texts that fall within its purview. Brown's excellent study significantly increases our understanding of numerous plays in the period. Her discussion of the evolution of heroic action, for example, yields valuable insights into the nature of Dryden's mature heroic dramas, much as her conception of transitional comedy results in a stimulating reappraisal of Congreve's achievement. But there are occasions on which her conceptual terms seem either to encourage misplaced emphases or to disregard alternative readings. For example, in defining the discrepancy between social and moral assessment in *The Man of Mode*, Brown makes too much of Etherege's "implicit criticism" of Dorimant. Rather than being juxtaposed to Harriet's "naturalness," Dorimant's social accomplishment complements her equal ability to dissemble and manipulate. Their exchange in III, iii makes it clear that each is capable (or "guilty") of affected agreeableness. And any sympathy for Dorimant's cast mistresses is wasted or short-lived; Bellinda, the best candidate for such sympathy, enters their affair with her eyes open, knowing both Dorimant's nature and the rules of the game. Similarly, in defining the moral action of *Cato*, Brown argues that Addison intends audiences to view his protagonist as one whose absolute virtue remains "unqualified and unflinching" from beginning to end, and that, faced with a static and infallible hero, he resorts to trickery in providing a dynamic plot by proxy (through subsidiary characters), thus giving Cato "the credit of a tragic action without any of the normally attendant flaws." Clever as it is, I think this explanation is mistaken. I have argued elsewhere that the emphasis of Act V focuses on Cato's fallibility. Moreover, shortly before composing the last act (nine years after the first four were finished), Addison wrote that "a person of an absolute and consummate virtue should never be introduced in tragedy" (*Spectator* No. 273; January 1712) because the spectacle of perfect virtue suffering may raise pity but not terror,

since we do not resemble the suffering person. Ultimately, *Cato* is not a moral action that attempts to depict an infallible man of unqualified virtue.

A final caveat: perhaps any study that organizes dramatic history in broad generic categories risks suggesting that its categories are more inclusive than they are. Brown's work traces the major generic shifts in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama admirably, but there are numerous plays that remain outside her categories. Many full-length comic and serious plays written after 1700, for example, do not take the form of moral action.

Brown's essay is an important contribution to the study of Restoration and eighteenth-century drama and the latter's relationship to the novel. By example, it also answers some of our questions about how generic history can and should be approached.

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*An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque* by  
Walter L. Reed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. Pp. vii +  
334. \$22.50.

*Reflections on the Hero as Quixote* by Alexander Welsh. Princeton: Princeton  
University Press, 1981. Pp. x + 244. \$15.00.

Although Walter Reed and Alexander Welsh proclaim quite different objectives in their respective discussions of the European-American novel, they share more than might at first appear evident. In his *Reflections on the Hero as Quixote*, Welsh regards Cervantes' hero as the incarnation of an attitude toward life that he himself has a strong tendency to share. By defining this attitude and examining variations upon it in the "quixotic" heroes of *Joseph Andrews*, *Tristram Shandy*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Pickwick Papers*, *The Newcomes*, and *The Idiot*, he has found a vehicle for his own philosophical speculations on the linkage between individual identity and the pursuit of justice in an arbitrary and ultimately incomprehensible world. In contrast, Reed employs *Don Quixote* and the Spanish picaresque as opposing narrative possibilities in the history (or "diacritical space") of the novel. Tracing this opposition through a series of primary examples (*Moll Flanders*, *Joseph Andrews*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Confidence Man*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Felix Krull*, *The Sot-Weed Factor*, and *Terra Nostra*), he advances his thesis that the novel in either of these forms is essentially a defiance of established literary tradition and, by extension, a challenge to conventional modes of thought and behavior.

What conjoins these apparently disparate enterprises is not only the pre-eminence which they accord to Cervantes' masterpiece. They also share a common tendency to distance themselves from the New Critical, structuralist, and deconstructionist approaches which have influenced them in various ways, as they themselves would undoubtedly admit. Even though Welsh's book is a

meditation on the nature of life and Reed's is an anti-systematic history of the novel, both construct their central hypotheses around a Romantic notion of individuality, which in turn becomes a determining characteristic in their definitions of literary realism. For Welsh, individuality can be attained by people who perceive an injustice, attempt to rectify it, and ultimately suffer pain or humiliation as a consequence of their efforts; such people go beyond the conventional roles and ethical principles which an existing social order obliges them to adopt, and in doing so, they become uniquely themselves. Accounts of this equixotic sequence of experiences are realistic, Welsh contends, because they correspond with the "way things are."

According to Reed, individuality inheres in the novelistic text which, by its nature, defies generic constraints and introduces non-literary semantic codes in an attempt to assert its own novelty and truthfulness in the face of stereotypical, falsifying conventions from an existing literary tradition. He proceeds to suggest that the diverse codes and the demands of tradition are reconciled with these claims to uniqueness in a series of negotiations enacted in the text. Because these negotiations are governed by a consistent set of priorities, he coins the term "protocol" to describe them and to denominate what might be regarded as the identity principle of any given text. Such works are realistic in the sense that literary traditions and conventions always seem inadequate to the felt reality of a contemporary period, whereas by striving for uniqueness, the novel seeks to provide what is missing from tradition and convention.

Like Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset, Welsh uses Quixote and the quixotic hero as pretexts for elaborating his own philosophy of life, and it is on this basis that his "reflections" must ultimately be judged. The major tenets of his position emerge most clearly in his delineation of a dialectical opposition between the quixotic hero and the historical realist hero, invented by Sir Walter Scott and best exemplified by Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean. This opposition, he argues, is the source of tensions which can be observed in twentieth-century fictional heroes like Nabokov's Humbert Humbert. However, Welsh himself finds the historical realist pole of this opposition inadequate to a genuine understanding of the human condition, because it is based on the untenable belief that history will necessarily sanction individual identity and culminate in a just situation. For the historical realist hero, quixotism or idealism is no more than an adolescent state which the mature hero simply outgrows.

However, if "existence is absurd," as Welsh assumes, this attitude represents a false closure on what can only be an unending search for meaning. The two types of meaning with which he is most concerned are individual identity and justice, and his paradigmatic model for discussing them is the quixotic hero. In both the real world and in the fictional world of Don Quixote, injustice is encountered only by accident, and most injustices simply recede into the "tangled web" of circumstances in which any attempt to rectify them would require the perpetration of a new injustice. Yet when injustice penetrates the individual consciousness and generates an impulse to transform "the way things are" into "the way things ought to be," the individual begins to sense his own being apart from the conventional roles and habits he has been conditioned to accept. And when an individual acts upon this impulse, he is defending the

principle that the creation of his identity lies in his own hands, although he may well be modelling his behavior on what he considers to be worthy models.

Because the overwhelming power of law, social practice, or physical superiority often stand in opposition to the impulse toward justice and personal identity, the individual who pursues them is repeatedly subjected to practical jokes or to the vicissitudes of circumstance which confront his idealistic aspirations with the harshness of objective reality. He is made to appear foolish, but there remains something admirable about him, because he has acted upon noble values—values which remain deeply embedded in the social fabric, despite a widespread tendency to repress them. Rather than acquiesce in the comforting teleology which the historical realist hero imposes on the world, the quixotic hero symbolizes the recognition that individuals can find authenticity and uniqueness in an endless but disciplined resistance to injustice. Within an environment characterized by the “essential arbitrariness of all activity,” Welsh concludes, “a quixotic identity is actually not worth anything, though it may be the only strictly individual identity that is available.” Obviously, he is using the example of Quixote to illustrate a largely existentialist attitude toward life, and his readers will have to determine the degree to which his “reflections” correspond to their own experiences of the world, but, whether or not the quixotic hero can support such a philosophy, Welsh has successfully outlined a recurrent pattern of character portrayal in the novel, and he has suggested cogent reasons why authors like Fielding, Sterne, Goldsmith, Dickens, Thackeray, and Dostoevski were attracted to it in a form originally devised by Cervantes.

Reed is far less concerned with the philosophical and referential qualities of literature than he is with the possibility that novels can be studied as readings of existing texts. Within the larger dialectical process that opposes the novel, which consistently seeks to assert its individuality and uniqueness in the face of neo-classical canons and generic rules, he discovers a more limited dialectic between the quixotic novel and the picaresque novel. Both first appeared in Golden Age Spain, and both dramatize problems confronted by a new class of readers—the conflict between high idealism and mundane reality in quixotic fictions and the opposition between divine transcendence and human degradation in the picaresque novels. Although he does not always describe with precision the ways in which subsequent novels re-enact the quixotic and the picaresque, he insists that they comprise the “most extensive series of rereadings of the novel by the novel in European and Westernized literary history.”

Such a claim exceeds the limited evidence Reed presents to justify it, but his larger thesis about the inherently anti-systemic, anti-generic thrust of the novel is in any case far more provocative, and he is wise to place more emphasis upon it than upon the quixotic-picaresque opposition to which the book's subtitle draws attention. According to Reed, both Cervantes and writers of early picaresque fictions recognized that the technology of the printed book opened the possibility of addressing readers who might not share the neo-classical tastes of aristocratic audiences and who would welcome the novel's assertion of its independence from them. At the same time, they realized that the autonomy they gained in this fashion was passed on to their new readers, who would not feel as constrained in interpreting novelistic texts as they might feel in



reading traditional works governed by the rules of a prescriptive poetics. In other words, the authority of the text is displaced from its producer to its consumer—the “idle reader” whom Cervantes anticipates as a detached observer of Don Quixote’s adventures. Because Cervantes knows that such readers are free to amend the “protocol” of a novel, he is also aware that he has lost some control over the performance of his own creation. Out of this awareness emerges the possibility of a new author-reader relationship which serves as an enabling precedent for all subsequent novelists.

This manner of approaching literature is capable of stimulating significant new insights into the history of the novel. It is unfortunate that Reed did not utilize it more often in his discussions of individual texts, but his knowledge of contemporary theory is so eclectic and his readings in primary texts so wide-ranging that he often pursues interesting digressions rather than focusing on the main thread of his argument. For the same reason, he occasionally applies different modes of analysis to different texts. For example, his chapter on Sterne is essentially a close textual reading which involves character analysis and the unobjectionable contention that the author’s own life was projected into his fiction. Such an approach is neither original nor immediately relevant to Reed’s overall purpose. In contrast, his chapter on *Moll Flanders* convincingly relates Defoe’s novel to the rise of neo-classicism and the existence of subliterary popular fiction. The real difficulty with Reed’s book, however, lies in the self-contradictory nature of his enterprise, for one cannot write history without accepting the possibility of referential discourse. Admittedly he counters this criticism in advance by proposing to write an “exemplary” history that eschews evolutionary hypotheses and proceeds by example, but, as Welsh has shown in his philosophical meditations on the extrinsic relevance of Quixote’s fictional experiences, history is more than “a tissue of texts” and novels are more than “readings of earlier novels.”

Despite digressiveness and an intertextualist bias, Reed’s book is a theoretically exciting one, for it offers readers the spectacle of an intellectually perceptive, well-read critic grappling with an extraordinarily complex problem. He may not have resolved it, but his insights are provocative, and they suggest numerous avenues for possible future speculation. Welsh’s book is less theoretically provocative, although it may prove attractive to a larger audience for precisely that reason. The two books do share several underlying “imaginative structures,” and they do begin with readings of the *Quixote* as a seminal work in the history of the novel; however, their goals are different and perhaps incompatible. Yet that should not deter people from picking up either book. Both are capable of engaging the serious reader in a lively intellectual dialogue.

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*Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America* by Larzer Ziff. New York: The Viking Press, 1981. Pp. xxv + 333. \$20.00.

Larzer Ziff's *Literary Democracy* does not break into our understanding of the Jacksonian period in American literature with any fresh news. The specialist will turn through it quickly, admiring the skill of its summarizing, the deftness of its paraphrase, and leave the book with his judgment of the great Jacksonian writers unaltered. This particular *mythos*, the Coming of Age, the Declaration of Cultural Independence, the Flowering, the Rebirth, has been told before. In his preface Ziff warily poses his precursors, Van Wyck Brooks and F. O. Matthiessen, and suggests that his approach will span the divergence of their historical writing. Brooks, it will be remembered, was essentially a social historian, Matthiessen an aesthete. Here, then, is Ziff, with Society (historical remarking) and Literature (interpretation), these two boulders. For the historian who does not have a political thesis driving his analysis, the project of fitting these two boulders together is very hard—and it is even harder to keep them moving in a synchronized motion. That has always been a problem in the writing of literary history, and Brooks and Matthiessen can indeed be seen to represent different resolutions. Ziff, however, does not resolve this problem; he simply moves back and forth. Two chapters are assigned to each major figure. Ziff will typically establish a socio-political framework in the first chapter, and then do a close reading of the respective texts in the second. Because neither the historical information nor the literary interpretation is surprising, a challenge to received opinion, one begins at length to consider the questions Ziff did not ask in *Literary Democracy*, to question his methodology.

What, after all, does "cultural independence" mean? We need somehow to know that before we entertain the question of how it happened between 1837 and 1861 in American literature. Those detailed and comprehensive histories of the concept, Perry Miller's *The Raven and The Whale* and Benjamin Spencer's *The Quest for Nationality*, demonstrate conclusively that it was a hot topic in the Jacksonian period, but how seriously, apart from its presence in contemporary rhetoric, its legendary existence, are we to take it? Whitman begins with the topic in the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, declaring the independence of American poetry in the preface, but then he finishes the declaration and settles down to his real subject, *myself*. There is ironic reference to it in *Walden*. Melville plays with the idea in *Moby Dick*, and savages it in *Pierre*. It is a trope in the literature, the American Idea, the American Scholar, an American Art, but what practically is its stature? "Literary democracy grew from the new nationalism," Ziff tells us, and then must explain the alienation of the major Jacksonian writers from that nationalism. It could just as easily be argued that the concept (or trope) is anterior, peripheral, and that the importance of Emerson, Thoreau, Melville and Whitman lies in their ability to transcend the simpleminded nationalism of their period and become, one by one, cosmopolitan, trans-cultural writers. Melville's struggle in *Moby Dick* is with Shakespeare, not Jefferson. The causative line in Ziff's thinking often falls, one-two-three, too readily into place. "One is led to the hypothesis," he writes, "that not only did America need to come into possession of a positive nationalism before a native literature

could flourish, but that it had to dispossess certain groups in the process so as to free (if not compel) their children to respond with the weapons of thought."

These are the securities of the literary historian who writes after Taine and before Foucault. Do not look for an inspection of motive, moral, or plot in this text. What are the politics of Ziff's *Literary Democracy*? To which interpretation of the period does it belong? Ideologically, this study is written midstream in the post-Parringtonian mainstream. Those "native" writers who came into the possession of a "positive" nationalism are herein studied. Ziff's justification for his exclusions is peremptory. Irving, Cooper and Bryant are "conservatives" who "trim their work to foreign dimensions." We are, as we read *Literary Democracy*, in the surehanded grip of a positivist. This is a literary history that ends happily. In this regard, *Literary Democracy* is an enjoyable book. There are fine moments when a donnish aperçu will be well-turned. Ziff's appreciation of Emerson's critique of the solid English self, for example, is keenly rendered. Everything is familiar in this history, even the selection of the tributary texts: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, *The Monks of Monk Hall*, which are roundly reasoned forth. This is a sensible reading of Hawthorne, the judgment of Margaret Fuller is fair, and ditto the piece on Poe. Ziff's "phonemic" analysis of "Song of Myself" will strike some as rather labored, but his overall sense of Whitman is sound. So, with anecdote, with aperçu, he summarizes the relation of Jacksonian literature to Jacksonian society, shows these particular writers struggling with and expressing certain salient democratic ideas and myths, and the summary is comfortably stated within a finished interpretation. What are the politics of *Literary Democracy*? The composition of this study, with its major and minor figures, resembles the composition of the present Supreme Court.

The problem finally with *Literary Democracy* is that it isn't very democratic. Ziff rereads the canon, minus the conservatives, sans Cooper, and betrays really a parochial and/or elitist conception of what is in a democratic literature: essays, meditations, poetry, fiction. Could not one consider those jewels of Jacksonian oratory, the Webster-Hayne debate, the Lincoln-Douglas debate, eminent examples of a democratic literary art, high symbolic drama? And why is it that all such liberally inclined literary histories continue to ignore the relevance of *The Book of Mormon*? Here, take it any way you like, is the most significant of the homespun masterpieces in the Jacksonian period, a sacred text "written" by the commonest of all the Jacksonian writers, a preliterate, out-of-work scriber, one of the roughs. Joseph Smith would not only invent a fabulous prehistory for the New World, he would go on to reconstitute, in his own terms, for his own church, the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution. Ziff does not explore the range of Jacksonian writing that lies outside the described field of the American Renaissance. Still, it is pleasurable to take again that walk around Brooklyn with Whitman and Thoreau, to think of Thoreau as a porcupine, to go out tramping with Emerson and Carlyle. Ziff astutely renders these scenes, explains the significance of the event, and at this level, as informed professorial narrative, *Literary Democracy* is absorbing.

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*Hiers to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism* by John Burt Foster Jr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982. Pp. 474. \$27.50.

Foster's is a very intelligent and sensitive book, exemplary in its scrupulous, detailed scholarship and a lucid, teacherly treatment of concepts and texts. Convinced that "if the recent turn towards theory in literary studies has raised the intellectual level of criticism, it has also undermined our respect for details" (403), Foster proposes a resolutely empirical attention to what he calls the "literary legacy" of Nietzsche. Such attention entails a good deal more than a precise record of facts. By keeping a wary distance from contemporary views of Nietzsche he hopes to recover the variety of ways Nietzsche elicits from Gide, Mann, Lawrence and Malraux "shifting and imaginative sympathies" which must be "rendered in images, characters, situations and dialogue" (410).

Foster begins with a definition of modernism general enough to accommodate the variety he seeks while still indicating the central presence Nietzsche will have within it. "The modernist has a sense of having made a break with the traditions of the recent past that is more drastic than would have occurred in a continuous process of growth and development" (3), so he or she is likely to react to this sense of break by radical experimentation in form (either to recover the past or to clarify our distance from it) and by a sharp questioning of all received values. This questioning produces several different ways of using Nietzsche, often at odds within a single text. The writer will at times imitate or echo his source, at times engage him in intense rivalry. Similarly the specific form the connection assumes can be created by any one of four alternatives definable by a matrix of possible relations between idea and image (the source's ideas or images can be rendered by a writer conceptually or as part of concrete situations). Finally we can distinguish the influence significant within a literary text by defining "the Nietzschean elements" as they are "gathered along some interpretive axis within the work like a basic formal pattern, an underlying thematic concern or assumption, a structural element, or an autonomous aspect of a larger whole" (147). Such openness to "intrinsic" complexity in turn justifies a concern almost exclusively with "high-culture" contexts because the cultural current created by "the sense of a break is not going to derive in any simple way from historical conditions" (413). Before we can return literature to society we must understand its complex organization and social details.

I quote Foster a good deal because a good deal of care has gone into his specific formulations. This is nowhere more evident than in the book's central chapter which clarifies the basic network of Nietzschean ideas that forms his legacy to modernism. The ideas themselves are common coin for any reader of Nietzsche. All too uncommon, nonetheless, is the precision Foster brings to them as he tries to establish the four master concepts structuring the conceptual forces constituting the Nietzschean current in Modernism. (Foster offers somewhat inconsistent summaries on pp. 40-41, 417.) Most obviously resonant for writers is the polaristic model of thinking central to the birth of tragedy. Foster avoids effusive speculations on the Apollonian and Dionysiac in order to concentrate on another level of inquiry. He wants us

to understand how Nietzsche tempts writers to explore dualistic tensions, so he emphasizes the structural model he establishes. Nietzsche's poles dramatize links between conceptual and instinctual drives and they articulate crucial differences between negations (when the opposed drives exclude one another) and contraries (where the two forces organize their energies by means of a dynamic relation to one another). Polar thinking in Nietzsche is not dialectical because one does not emerge as the negation of another. Thus no Hegelian resolution is possible. Rather the key contrast is between "polar nullity," a state where one force cannot contribute to a larger whole, and "bi-polar unity," a state "possessing greater energy and complexity than either pole" (46). In Greek tragedy, for example, there is no synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysiac but a single agent can experience the forces in poised balance—necessity in form and form inseparable from the tragic root.

Foster's subsequent categories capture basic ways that Nietzsche transforms his initial oppositions into a critical psychology capable of analyzing the ills of a culture and of proposing alternatives to it. Once the psychology is clear, one can move to the portraits, images and myths which give concrete density to Nietzsche's cultural vision. Such elements in turn take their fullest strength when seen in relation to the ideal of psychological health which Foster defines as "aesthetic naturalism." This concept unites the source of drives in instinct with a teleological element that can be realized as a form of process. "Health" consists in experiencing the instincts as being satisfied within the activity of creating complex, integrative forms immanent within the moment. Nietzsche thus unites aestheticism's cult of art with naturalistic imperatives and establishes fundamental homologies between psychic and textual forces. Moreover the immanence inherent in seeing the satisfaction of instinct as the root and goal of human forming acts gives Nietzsche a powerful contrastive stance from which he can clearly indicate the forms of idealism blocking self-realization. Ressentiment and tragic affirmation play out this drama—the former a reactive subordination of self to outside pressures and higher values (whose emptiness breeds a frustrated, objectless violence) and the latter an image of the self fully confronting all the forces impinging on and testing the individual will. Such conflicts are so fully imagined that the particular forces establish abstract categories which incorporate basic social and cultural homologues. Foster's third topic, then, consists of the concepts of nihilism and decadence which carry these homologies, but often with a mythic elaboration that requires Foster to attempt a precision Nietzsche "failed to provide": "a decadent culture" can shape experience to some extent even though its capacity to affirm life fully and directly "has been lost" (85), while with Nihilism "no cultural form at all is produced" (86). The latter case is a polar opposite of tragic affirmation because it consists in facing the universe as total chaos and finding no cultural or personal forming energy that enables one to affirm life. Similarly the mind's capacity to think imaginatively collapses into fragmented abstractions and the vague pieties of Wagnerian mysticism.

Foster's transition to his final topic reveals the muted, humane precision of his style. "So intense is Nietzsche's mood of cultural crisis that even this stern critic of wishful thinking voices hopes for renewal" (109). In order to grasp Nietzsche the prophet, the stance modern writers found hardest to take, Foster

concentrates on the various roles the concept of "will to power" plays in Nietzsche's efforts to replace "nihilism with coherence, objectivity with personality" (113). The will to power is attributed to the man of willful self-mastery, to the man who accepts the assertions of instinct (even to the point of violence), and to the visionary who can stare down nihilism and create meanings for the age of anti-Christ. Foster sees clearly how Nietzsche's needs make him vacillate between imagining power as productive and as coercive making. And Foster's orientation allows him to preserve the multiple senses since in this respect Nietzsche becomes a type for the workings of the legacy that continues to fascinate and to repel. Nietzsche's aesthetic naturalism captures energies still constructive in an age sceptical of all idealizations. Yet it is impossible not to try to idealize those drives, with the dangerous result of an aesthetic politics that confuses individual and social forms of organization. Thus built into Nietzsche's critical power is a form of idealization terrifying to the residues of humanist sensibility. These contraries make it impossible for the writers studied to rest content with too facilely Nietzschean a stance.

In his discussions of Nietzsche's ideas, Foster gives brief summaries of their reception by his novelists. Now, after a brief transitional discussion of images and myth in Nietzsche, Foster shifts the emphases from idea to image and from a single network to the various dramatic worlds engendered by a complexity that demands non-discursive presentation. I cannot here discuss in detail the readings of *The Immoralist*, *Death in Venice*, *Women in Love*, *The Plumed Serpent*, *Man's Fate*, *The Walnut Trees of the Altenburg*, and *Doctor Faustus*. Suffice it to say that as a practical critic Foster is always interesting, often moving, and occasionally brilliant (his treatment of what Tadzio means to Aschenbach, of the cultural tensions Malraux deals with, and of the ways Lawrence uses his "material imagination" in *Women in Love* are practical criticism at its very best). Moreover Foster complements his sense of specific textual dramas by organizing his work into a narrative example of a legacy at work. Each text is chosen in part because it embodies a specific encounter with its predecessor's use of Nietzsche. His project also establishes a good deal more flexibility than most academic critics muster. For by concentrating on the use and generative force of specific ideas, he need not squeeze his material into a single thematic structure. Foster's work is often more commentary than interpretation as it fills out the significance of images and scenes, shows how characters reveal rich psychological complexes, or traces some feature of an author's rethinking earlier solutions. Correspondingly Foster is free to perform his own multiple critical selves as he moves between texture and structure and among stances developed in each of the countries he studies (especially those represented by Richards, Kermode, and Auerbach).

Such significant virtues cannot be without their cost. I want to raise the issue of whether even a work as judicious and sensitive as Foster's can achieve a fully satisfying treatment of influence while subordinating theoretical speculation to a sophisticated form of critical empiricism. Consider first the problem that vexes all empiricism—how to locate the specific object which establishes concrete tests for empirical propositions. What concept of force will clarify the path of transmission from source to the resulting structures? Foster gives us a four-term matrix for this relationship and he acknowledges the importance of Nietzsche's

style. But his critical arguments concentrate on the movement from ideas to complex images they engender when novelists grapple with them. However no one is more critical than Nietzsche of so isolating ideas or giving them causal efficacy. As Foster realizes, a major dimension of Nietzsche's appeal resides in his producing a relation to ideas compelling to an age obsessed with psychology. This entails forms of influence not based on precise concepts but centered in the seductions and permissions carried in his dramatic stances. At one pole the effect on his successors derives from an aphoristic style capable of authenticating any idea by the power of expression. But this engenders a complementary pathos because the writers are in a position to reflect upon where the success of style can lead. Triumph seems inseparable from madness and isolation. And these states may be signs that the ideas fail or signs that a fully authentic vision cannot exist in society. In either case influence resides in a personal plight which engenders complex problems of identification. To follow Nietzsche may be, on his terms, a failure of intellect and will, but to break from him may be a failure of courage. Instances like these call our attention to the distinctiveness of Nietzsche's break with the past and the radical restructuring of our idea of ideas that accompanies it. Especially in *Ecce Homo* and *Zarathustra*, the theme Foster dwells on, of seeking a unity of thinking and feeling, takes the form of reversing older priorities. Ideas do not control feelings but express them. So, if the philosopher wants to capture the true hierarchy of forces in our actions, he must become what I call a philosopher of literal states of feeling. On the dramatic level Nietzsche constructs a style of inquiry where the mind tries to dwell within its own unmediated emotional demands. Instead of interpreting emotions, Nietzsche explores the emotions that drive the interpretive will. In doing that he liberates all reflective media—music, painting, and writing—by illustrating the imaginative desire inherent in making, but he also reinforces the guilt and terror that accompany any refusal to live out such a vision of authenticity, however good the rationale for moderation. Gide and Mann may be most influenced by Nietzsche not in their cultural criticism but in their uneasy attitude towards their own efforts to rationalize their own plight by trusting any ideas at all. And the psychological literalness of texts as diverse as the Circe chapter in *Ulysses* and *Death of Virgil* may more truly participate in the Nietzschean current than works which grapple with those puny characters, his "ideas."

Perhaps even more difficult than isolating the causal units of empiricist inquiry about influence is deciding on what grounds one can speak of cause at all. I do not mean to invoke Hume but to ask how one decides where a figure like Nietzsche is in fact an influence and where he is simply another strand woven into a historical carpet. I am moved to this question by the fact that Foster at times falls victim to the bane of all influence studies, the tendency to attribute to a specific source what may be merely a shared cultural condition. His reader begins to wonder whether all modern conflicts between order and passion need be attributed to Dionysus and Apollo or all renderings of empty willfulness to Nietzschean ideas of decadence and nihilism. More than historical accuracy is at stake. For the more we see stances as partially symptomatic and not governed by conscious choice, the more the whole idea of influence as the rational exploitation of a legacy latent in Nietzsche seems

terribly limited, psychologically and historically. This point need not require pure sociological analysis—Foster is compelling on the difficulties with this. But it will demand a more flexible sense of the interplay of personal and impersonal forces, determining and determined states of mind. That in turn probably involves a more complex sense of modernism than Foster provides because we need to know the contexts impinging on Nietzsche and creating conditions that allow his work to remain contemporary for the novelists.

The question of contemporaneity, however, will not be resolved simply by invoking historical contexts. The more we probe it, especially in relation to the need to understand the presentational and symptomatic features of Nietzsche's work, the more we find it difficult to rely on the linear view of history required for Foster's kind of influence study. On the simplest level it seems clearly inadequate to interpret Nietzsche's enduring influence as only the result of shared historical conditions. But what else gives him his force and allows us to continue to respond to it while modifying our contemporary visions of Nietzsche? I cannot answer this question, but I can suggest that at the least we need a psychology which explains how writers from other eras can affect us. This, in turn, requires a strongly synchronic orientation towards what texts preserve and what contemporary insights allow us to claim to have been true of the past. If one is more sympathetic than Foster to the images of the psyche contained in the contemporary versions of Nietzsche provided by Derrida and DeLeuze, one finds terms for getting at the expressive literalness, sense of laughing ecstatic destruction, and fascination with the inadequacy of our efforts at rationality which Foster underplays. It is true that the modernists lacked concepts for such phenomena, yet, as Foster argues but does not follow up, who continues to read Nietzsche if they seek "concepts"? The more concrete the presentation, the more likely it is that contemporary critical languages can contribute to our grasp of the past (at least once a sense of the past frees us from being exclusively in their grasp). To put the point more generally, we must learn to read Nietzsche in the way he managed to make his contemporary situation a frame for understanding features of the past not apparent to the agents but basic to their actions. For our discussion, the most important issue at stake is the need for a critical language that can handle the investments basic to identifying and struggling with another thinker. If empiricism will not suffice, I think we must try to adopt for less ideological purposes the Lacanian concept of the imaginary as it is elaborated in Althusser, Machery, and Jameson. Nietzsche especially demands such work because his own psychic stage is often filled by his submitting to the ultimate appeal and trap of power by dreaming of how he will exert influence.

Nietzsche's lesson, in his own use of the past and in his effects, is that we live at once within and beyond historical terms. Our actions also take place against a typological backdrop and in view of successors who will clarify those features of ourselves we could not see clearly. Thus while Foster is right to emphasize Nietzsche's perspectivism, he should also sympathize with the complex psyche that sought an understanding of perspective which would partially deny the necessity of relativism it affirms. No fully human thinker yields his vitality to a historicist empiricism. The best proof of this is the feeling we get from books like Foster's which so fully understand a major



figure's ideas that, as they look for sources, they in fact reverse the priorities. Reading Foster I often felt that he was not so much identifying actual influences as demonstrating how fully we can read modern fiction if we fully internalize in our readings modes of attention exemplified in Nietzsche's work. At his richest Foster says less about the historical Nietzsche than about the permanent Nietzsche who lives by determining what in history we can take as empirically compelling. Nietzsche even offers ideas for interpreting this very strange phenomenon, ideas whose concern with the power of constructed images may be constitutive of modernist approaches to fiction.

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*Alternative Pleasures: Postrealist Fiction and The Tradition* by Philip Stevick. Urbana, Chicago, London: The University of Illinois Press, 1981. Pp. xii + 156. \$13.95.

*Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism and the Ironic Imagination* by Alan Wilde. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981. Pp. xii + 209. \$15.00.

While postmodernist literature and its accompanying criticism move in more than one direction, its strongest thrust against modernism aims at a redefinition of the nature of form and order in literature, of the relation of literature to the world, of the self or subject in relation to others. Yet both the literature and criticism of postmodernism continue to be shaped by the modernist perception of the world as fragmented, random, contingent, disordered and chaotic with the consequence that the self feels radically alienated from others and a society bereft of any common or communal values and faith. Sometimes the modernist perception seems based on a reading of recent scientific theory, sometimes on a discomfiting reading of society and the more radical movements within it. Whatever the case, modernist writers and their supporting critics valued a highly ordered literature of irony, myth and symbol that radically probed the depths of the self and all too frequently absorbed character into a reflexive aesthetic verbal patterning.

Postmodernism and its attendant criticism continues to work within modernism's perception and metaphors of reality, but rejects the depth of the subject, finds delight in surfaces, accepts chaos and builds it into forms which valorize such perceptions. Where the highly wrought modernist work stood in opposition to the world, often seeking to rise above its chaos through carefully structured irony, the postmodernist work makes fragmentation part of its form and often seeks to reduce the number of signs that distinguish it as art. Professors Stevick and Wilde further in provocative ways the central thrust of postmodernist criticism and in their success come to illustrate the boundaries of that criticism.

Stevick, in *Alternative Pleasures*, sets American fiction of the late 'sixties

and the decade of the 'seventies against the background of both the realist and modernist traditions. As opposed to past seriousnesses about the novel, contemporary fiction bases itself on the metaphor of fiction-as-game, as play. This ludic impulse releases enormous energy and feeling and expresses itself in a style which provides perceptions and knowledge unavailable in previous modes of fiction.

For example, Stevick points out, contemporary fictionists use naive narrators and forms of narration, not as Voltaire did, to satirize the naïf's world view, nor as Salinger did, to reveal the naïf from the inside, but rather to create a deliberately cartoon-like clarity of vision valorizing vulnerability and self-exposure. The grim and depressing, even the awful and violent are, according to Stevick, rendered tolerable through the "sweet and sometimes stupid voice which speaks of them" (p. 93). Naïvete, then, is not automatically funny, nor a distortion of mature experience, but a valid mode of perceiving, and, more importantly, of being in the world.

Similarly for Stevick the kind of characters and the feeling expressed for them signals postmodernism's different relationship with the world. Modernism congealed around Sartre's metaphor that hell is other people and took an attitude that Stevick characterizes as "ironic scorn" toward professionals and the lower classes. Contemporary fiction not only introduces such characters, but treats them with an "unreserved sensual pleasure, in living in the world, different from anything in the decades before" (p. 54). Further, recent writers treated such characters and the events in their lives with tenderness and sentiment. Such willingness to display feelings and attitudes uncharacteristic of modernism reduces the distance between authors and their creations, between audience and character and finally between author, work, and audience.

Often enough these fictions are filled with what Stevick calls "mock-fact" and "dreck" (images from commercial culture), not to establish verisimilitude as with the realists, nor to create a reflexive, aesthetically coherent symbol system, as with the moderns, but rather to mock the whole enterprise of erecting a fictive world so central to both realists and modernists. The result is the release of inventive and comic energy "reflecting an ambivalent evaluation of the things of this world" (p. 133).

These elements are often combined in works that give the appearance of traditional satire; but, Stevick argues, that satire has no object, no normative values. To paraphrase Nathaniel West, whom Stevick quotes: "there is nothing in these works to root for, and what is worse, no rooters" (pp. 120, 121). Such satire demonstrates, Stevick claims, "the pleasure and power of a free invention that looks like satire, but elevates its own stylized vision above its author's wish to direct our judgments" (p. 121). The energy of style, then, takes its place with the naïf, the vulnerable, the nonjudgmental, in Stevick's characterization of postmodernist fiction in America.

In *Horizons of Assent*, Wilde focuses on the theme of irony in modernist and postmodernist fiction. Conventional literary irony, whose locus is satire, implies, according to Wilde, that where there is fragmentation, chaos, debase-ment, and stupidity, there once was unity, form, order, elevation, and intelligence. In short, conventional literary irony, here called "mediate" irony, implies the existence of a metaphysical and religious order; it looked back

toward Eden, or upward toward heaven to find its norms. In contrast to this irony modernism developed "disjunctive" irony which posits no Eden or heaven, but rather uses irony to order the fragmented and chaotic world it perceives. This irony seeks to create a literature in which equal and opposed possibilities are held in a state of total poise. At its apex, this irony becomes "absolute" irony, the irony of high modernism.

Dialectically, however, this irony contains its opposites, termed by Wilde the "anironic." The anironic of absolute irony, gives rise to a desire not only for fusion, but also for participation in the world, rather than for hovering above it, savoring aesthetic paradox. The anironic in Wilde is close to Stevick's sentiment, but he feels the latter term cannot be effectively reintroduced to critical discourse, so laden is it with pejorative connotation. Further, Wilde argues, the move away from modernist irony finally reflects that movement's failure to come to terms with experience.

Absolute irony then, generates a new form of irony Wilde calls "suspensive." This irony is an integrative gesture toward the world. In the words of Jerzy Kosinski (whom Wilde quotes) suspensive irony provides "a true sense of the randomness of life's moments, [and] man is at peace with himself" (p. 10). Suspensive irony, without diminishing the modernist sense of the world's fragmentation, participates in the world, finds ways of enjoying "the smaller pleasures." The bulk of Wilde's book traces in astute and provocative readings the developments of this irony in the works of Forster, Isherwood, Compton-Burnett, Sukenick, Federman, Elkin, and Barthelme.

Interestingly, in an argument that needs full-fledged development, Wilde roots irony in perception, in the body. With Merleau-Ponty he claims that there exists "a natal pact between ourselves and the world, between ourselves and the body" (p. 29). By rooting irony in the body, Wilde not only makes it a pre-critical and pre-conceptual response, but begins to develop a materialist theory of irony. He concurs with the spleen in Max Apple's story "Free Agents" which asserts: "Now it's the body's turn to come into the twentieth century" (p. 132). Wilde approaches the insight of Fusto Maijstral, the Maltese poet in Pynchon's *V* who believes that art is neither a communication with angels nor the unconscious, but "with the guts, genitals and five portals of sense." For Wilde, irony is the body's response to doubleness, to fragmentation and that response enables postmodernist irony to enter into the world.

Stevick and Wilde are aware of the negative criticism of postmodernist fiction and its interpreters. The "cultivation," says Stevick, "of a range of verbal activities that in another period might be called cuteness, cleverness, or mere facility and worse" (p. 45) has brought postmodernism under fire. Wilde points out that reductive postmodernism (represented for him by aspects of Sukenick and Gass), while scorning "the modernist desire to recover original wholeness," nevertheless imposes "on unpatterned reality the squamousness of the abstracting mind" (p. 144) and comes close to repeating the aestheticism of the early part of the century. "Or," Wilde asserts, "one should say that aestheticism is the master sign under which much that is reductive in contemporary culture coalesces" (p. 144).

Correct in their assessment of the dangers of aestheticism, these critics stop

short of an analysis that reveals the root cause of that tendency in both modernism and postmodernism. Put simply, the modernist rhetorical cluster for describing the world—chaos, fragmentation, randomness—is at best ambiguous and at worst mystifying. In its baldest forms this cluster implies that not only are the universe and nature contingent and random, but that social processes are finally uninterpretable and therefore unchangeable. Acceptance of that cluster deprives the world and society of meaning, further isolating the self. In this relationship energy and style or ironic gestures become significant responses. But changes in style are just that because there is no designated agency of social change and we move randomly from one style to another.

Pynchon's Fausto knew well the effect of bombs on metaphors and bodies, and Elkin's Boswell, breaking the lock on the Colloseum door the better to be seduced by the Principessa, learns of the effects of money on the body and its attendant metaphors. If the criticism of which Stevick and Wilde form a part is to move forward, it must begin a critique of the rhetoric with which modernism and postmodernism describe the world; in particular if it is determined to participate in the world, it must come to understand the effects of bombs and money, war and work on the body and on the language of literature. Postmodernist fiction, however energetic, sentimental or anironic, and stylish, can only provide us with mythologies in Roland Barthes' sense of the term. The central processes and structure of the social world are anonymous and the relationship between the social world and the language of literature remains mystified. If postmodernism is to move toward the world and give us more than myths of adjustment, it must encounter the relationship between the language of literature and the language we use to discuss social, political, and economic processes. That is the task for a postmodernist criticism in which Wilde and Stevick will hopefully share.

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