

2012

## Book Reviews

Criticism Editors

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism>

---

### Recommended Citation

Editors, Criticism (2012) "Book Reviews," *Criticism*: Vol. 24: Iss. 4, Article 5.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism/vol24/iss4/5>

## Book Reviews

*Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and Music*  
by James Anderson Winn. Yale University Press, 1981. Pp. xiv + 381. \$18.95.

This book explores the changing relations between poetry and music in Western culture from the ancient world up to modern times. Its scope is broad, though it is concerned primarily and specifically with vocal music in the sophisticated tradition and the interrelations subsisting between the sister arts, and only minimally with purely instrumental music, which in certain cultural periods assumes an autonomous kind of existence. Its author integrates his interests in the two arts with remarkable evenness. Judicious in his selection of materials and astute in generalization, James Winn is as well-schooled and articulate in one as in the other. A student of eighteenth-century English poetry, he has previously published *A Window in the Bosom: The Letters of Alexander Pope*, a work which deals at some length with Pope's conscious handling of practical poetic matters as such are reflected in his correspondence. A serious flute-player whose taste in repertory, we are told, ranges from the baroque to the contemporary, Winn has in recent years appeared with some frequency as a recitalist as well as a recording artist. He is a professor of English literature at Yale University.

In his preface Winn readily admits that no such book as he has written—chronologically alone it demands a vast canvas—can hope to be all-inclusive. He points out that he has been more interested in the technical and aesthetic relations between the two arts than in their social and psychological relations. In the six chapters which comprise the study—each one alone could easily have been expanded to a booklength study—the most space is accorded to developments between the two arts from the Renaissance to the present day, where not only the music is more familiar to most readers, but where there is an abundance of evidence available for his “constructive” analysis of how poetic and musical skills constantly influenced one another. The author states: “I have written neither a history of music nor a history of poetry but a history of the relations between the two.” Refining upon the usual metaphorically described sibling relationship of music and poetry as “sister” arts, he moves more pragmatically to discuss music and poetry in a wedded union, which he describes as “intimate, productive, sporadically marital relations, which have included episodes of jealousy, ironic misunderstandings, and attempts by practitioners of one art to control practitioners of the other.”

Beginning with a discussion of music in primitive cultures, Winn suitably cites C. M. Bowra's argument that poetry “is in its beginnings intimately welded with music.” His observation following later in the chapter that the Greeks used the single word *mousike* to describe dance, melody, poetry, and elementary education emphasizes the unified approach which they applied to the temporal arts. A goodly portion of this opening chapter is concerned not only with Greek lyric poetry, including the “Delphic hymns” and their monodic frame, but also with

the impact music may have made on the recitation of Homeric epics and even some Euripidean tragedies. "The Word as the New Song" is an apt title for Chapter 2, which aims to show how early Christian liturgy, evidently patterned on Jewish synagogue practice, introduced into Western culture a different set of stylistic conventions about the relations of text to music. The Ambrosian hymn is heralded as "a new kind of poetry, whose simple and explicit formal shape makes it an ideal didactic and devotional vehicle." Augustine is presented in his usual pose as fearful of music's power to gratify the senses and to lead the mind astray, yet not without his recognition that it maintains a position of some honor since its setting gives life to words. In this chapter a section of considerable length is devoted to sequences and tropes, whose efflorescence in the early medieval period modified greatly the standardization of Gregorian plain chant achieved in the sixth century and gave rise to many new advances: the possibility for developing typological parallels established in the sequence hymns through their formal parallelism of strophes, and the exploitation of the antiphonal form in the process of troping as a means of providing sung dialogue which led to the growth of liturgical drama.

The third chapter, concerned largely with the polyphonists and the troubadours, explores construction and expression in the later middle ages. The growth of polyphonic music through such musical devices as organum, the practice of singing in parallel fourths, fifths, and octaves, and the concomitant developments of elaborately rhymed forms in the poems of the troubadours interacted upon each other in a remarkably fertile way the process of which is meticulously described. Winn here observes in this context: "When the composer was also the poet, as was the case with both Vitry and Machaut, the fitting together of musical and poetic shapes involved kinds of ingenuity before which even modern scholarship must stand amazed."

The fourth chapter, entitled "The Rhetorical Renaissance," contains material which will strike most readers as far more familiar. The new period is presented as emphasizing a new secularism prompting works to replace those of a medieval period which, however nominally sacred or secular its musical and poetic artifacts were, were still addressed to God; it dogmatically embraced humanist positions as a means of purging music of medieval artifice; and it wholeheartedly turned to the antique world in a search for aesthetic authority for pursuing thrilling melodies or affective language.

One of the most interesting sections of this chapter is concerned with the detailed discussion of text-setting and its relation to musical style in the frotolla and the madrigal. Here, notes Winn, the impulse for change came from the poets, not from the musicians. In the madrigal, composers responding to Petrarchan poetry by working out precise musical analogues for poetic techniques observed that the most obvious lay in the area of rhythm; that there was a more distant analogue between poetic and musical technique in the area of pitch; that if composers had a more precise means of expression in the areas of rhythm and pitch, poets had a similar advantage in describing emotional conflict; and that, in their manipulation of the overlapping and interlocking voices, the Italian madrigal composers found other ways to imitate and extend rhetorical technique.

In Chapter 5, entitled simply "Imitations," the focus falls largely on the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. The Jesuit Marin Mersenne, whose

*Harmonie Universelle* (1636) had summed up a good deal of Renaissance thought about music, is here seen as a key and pivotal figure anticipating new developments through his espousal of the cause of imitation. "Music," he is quoted as observing, "is just as much an imitation or representation as poetry, tragedy, or painting . . . because it makes with sounds, or with the articulate voice, what the poet makes with verse, the actor with gestures, and the painter with light, shadow, and color." Various interpretations and stormily debated in the ensuing centuries, for some in the age of rationalism imitation meant that poetry and music should express the *actual* emotions of their makers, and eventually this view led to Schopenhauer's definition of musical creation as a process independent of intellection which among the Romantics resulted in a philosophical drift toward an aesthetic of feeling.

While the importance of instrumental music increased steadily in the eighteenth century Winn notes that "even Bach's influential and profound instrumental music constitutes a relatively small percentage of his output; in the bulk of his work, his church cantatas and passions, Bach employed texts." Addison, to whom the author is indebted for his title *Unsuspected Eloquence*, he treats, in spite of his "complacent amateurism," as one who persuasively advances his belief not only in the power of music in mimetic or psychological terms but also in the importance of the primacy of texts. But less marked, he continues, is music's impact upon Pope and Swift. Winn observes that although "The Essay on Criticism" provides several excellent examples of sound-sense imitation, Pope, probably less interested in music than Addison, "could not admit that any instrumental music could have the logic, form, coherence, and syntax which, for him, were properties of words." And Swift, who provided a cantata text which in a setting by John Echlin satirically attacked a mimetically literal text-setting as absurd, reveals a skeptical attitude about the possibility of positive features emerging from the interrelations between the two arts.

In opposition to the late baroque insistence on richness of design in music, logic, and coherence of a purely musical kind, composers of the early nineteenth century began speaking a more Romantic language, "even claiming," says Winn, "that their music expresses their own powerful emotions." Theirs was a music which was formless, associative, even "feminine." Beethoven, having acquired the mythic character of a tone-poet, dealt with the mildly programmatic in the successive moments of his "Pastoral Symphony." And Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner, enthusiastically embracing the idea of program music as "an overtly imitative system of composition which seeks unusual equivalences for poetic plots or 'programs,'" made such representation a central part of a widening kind of imitation.

For Chapter 6, entitled, "The Condition of Music," the relationship between the two arts is brought up to date. The treatise *The Beautiful in Music* (1854) by Eduard Hanslick, the critic who was antipathetic to Wagner but friendly to Brahms, assumes a prominent position in the discussion of the opening paragraph. "It boldly," says Winn, "insists on music's autonomy, its independence not only from words (a battle already won in the eighteenth century) but from verbally definable feelings as well." This aesthetic position Winn finds to be strikingly similar to the literary aesthetics of I. A. Richards and the American New Critics. Hanslick, concerned with separating the imagination from both feeling and in-

tellect, is contrasted with Pater, who was concerned with fusing "intelligence and sensuality, the mind and the ear, to produce his 'imaginative reason.'" For Pater, music most completely realizes his combining ideal—the "perfect identification of form and matter," and therefore he asserts that "music . . . not poetry . . . is the true type or measure of perfected art." Auden is seen by Winn as scoring the same point, but from a poet's view. Regarding the composer's song as "an absolute gift" no less than acknowledging that his notes are "pure contraption," Auden would consider poetry to be the true type of perfected art.

The greatest of twentieth-century composers, concludes Winn, while convinced of the autonomy of music, have however not cut themselves off from poetry. He feels that the great danger for poets and composers in our time may be the tendency to widen the gap between the two by exaggerating it, by withdrawing into isolation. The dead academic serialism of the 1950s—"the weakest twentieth-century music"—Winn finds based on a rigorous working out of constructive principles and an ascetic disregard for expression. He finds some comfort in the observation that "the healthy and accurate recognition by modern theorists of the fundamental gap between the two arts—the fact that music has by nature greater constructive resources, and poetry greater expressive resources—need not mean that analogies between musical and poetic procedures are pointless. The pursuit of such analogies . . . has been a factor in the making of great works in both arts, and may in turn enrich our understanding of them."

When Winn tells us in his preface that he has been preparing to write this book all his life, his remark should be taken at face value, for it soon becomes clear that he has produced a master work that should serve to bring the practitioners of either art—creators and critics alike—together in a symbiotic union advancing both. This study displays a first-rate critical mind at work with sensitivity and penetration in an area of vital importance to all serious students of music and poetry. It also contains a carefully selected and up-to-date bibliography joining together the most recent studies in this area with standard and established works, and this is supplemented by several pertinent music illustrations introduced in every chapter as well as by quotations drawn from the works of theorists and philosophers from every cultural period.

ANDREW J. SABOL

*Brown University*

*Semiotics and Interpretation* by Robert Scholes. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982. Pp. ix + 161. \$12.95.

Robert Scholes explains the purpose of his latest book as follows: "I wish to show what happens when a practicing semiotician enters the traditional domain of literary interpretation." Though a known semiotician, curiously enough, he vows to enter the thicket with only a minimum of semiotic "paraphernalia" and occasionally stripped of all the equipment of foreign words, logical formulas, and diagrams that literary people generally find unbecoming in a literary critic. True to his word, only the first two chapters of eight are exclusively theoretical and,

at that, theory is rendered in the primer style of an introduction to literary semiotics, while the rest of the book uses semiotic theory mainly to set in motion interpretive procedures that actually converge with the objectives of traditional criticism, even though the two may appear to be adversarially related at points along the way. In this "undertaking," Scholes leans most heavily, in his words, on "Roland Barthes, Gerald Genette, Julia Kristeva, and Tzvetan Todorov in Paris, Umberto Eco in Italy, Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspensky in the Soviet Union, and Seymour Chatman in the United States." He puts their theoretical statements into practice by reading some short poems of the contemporary period, several American films, short stories by Joyce and Hemingway, sexual discourse, and a host of works in passing. These readings have their ingenious moments which culminate, no doubt, in the last chapter where Scholes reads readings of the female body to demonstrate the essential textuality of a seemingly natural object. Even so, the purpose of such a study which, by its very nature, has limited itself to saying little that is new about either theory or literature is something of an enigma.

It is important to recall that a venture into the "domain of literary interpretation" is not all that bold a move on Scholes's part. If he has left much of the paraphernalia of semiotics behind, he proceeds well armed with a sophisticated repertoire of literary critical strategies, and the question that consequently emerges from his book is whether Scholes is actually "entering" the discourse of humanist interpretation as an alien semiotician or returning to it as a literary critic and prodigal son. What he does prove—and paradoxically so—is that one cannot do both at the same time. Despite the fact that the essays comprising his book were written over a span of time for what may be assumed were a variety of occasions, there is this problem of dual affiliation haunting them all. The dilemma thus confronting the reader perhaps finds its analogue in a story by H. G. Wells called "The Country of the Blind" which Scholes uses to launch his discussion of irony. "In this story," he tells us, "a sighted person wanders into a remote village where all the inhabitants have been blind for generations. Keeping the old adage in mind, the sighted man expects to become master among the blind, but events do not work out that way, and he becomes a prisoner, thought by his captors to be mad." The source of the story's greatest irony does not ultimately lie in the inversion of reward and punishment as Scholes's interpretation suggests, for then the point of the story would be to give us an intolerable set of alternatives, blindness or madness. And what lesson can be drawn from that? The sighted person is condemned as a madman, however, not because he can see, but because he expects to gain authority in proportion to his superior perception. This, in a context where he is the last person according to the norms of the community who should have such power. Scholes's refusal to see the conflict in interests between semiotics and interpretation might be compared to the blindness of the sighted person who has wandered into the country of the blind.

The first chapter of *Semiotics and Interpretation* plunges us into a debate concerning how literature should be taught at the university, what we should produce not only as critics but also as teachers. This all depends, of course, on how one defines the literary object. While demonstrating that "the same set of words can be regarded as either a work or a text," Scholes neglects to point out that the same set of words cannot be regarded as a text and a work at the same time. A

text, as he suggests, creates its author as a field traversed by cultural codes, while just the opposite relationship obtains between the individual and language in the case of the work, where language is taken to be the product of the individual. As the object goes, so too go the ways of reading literature and reproducing it as criticism. In other words, to regard language as a work or as a text is to opt for one of two contrary modes of education. As Scholes explains, "students need to acquire the interpretive codes of the culture but they also need to see them as codes, so that they can appreciate those texts that reshape accepted ideas and at the same time defend themselves against the manipulative exploitation of received opinion." Yet it is clearly impossible to produce meaning and understand the mode of production one is enmeshed in at one and the same time, for to do so would require us to be both inside and outside a discourse. Nor is this a matter of preferring blindness over being sighted. If, on the one hand, the critic gains his authority by entering into literary critical discourse and equating that discourse with truth, then the semiotician claims superiority over the traditional critic by seeing that truth as a delusion and by revealing the textuality of the world of phenomena. This is a problem with authority, one profoundly ideological at base. By interpreting texts, literary criticism lays claim to a cultural domain where the standards of literary competence prevail. It is then in the semiotician's own interests to convert interpretation into a linguistic object which may be subjected to semiotic analysis.

By denying the degree to which semiotics is, by its very nature, a critique of literary critical discourse, Scholes allows a number of rather basic self contradictions into his book. In his second chapter on the semiotics of literature, for example, Scholes sets out to demonstrate that although literature is a separate world "in which we are no more than ghostly observers," art nevertheless "leaks out to color our phenomenal world, to help us assign meaning, value, and importance to the individual events and situations of our lives." Literature is thus presented as a higher form of discourse rather than as a part of a larger discourse. To view literature in this way, one could argue, is for Scholes to contradict the semiotic model he invokes for this chapter, Jakobson's model of communicative functions. Neither a part of life nor a remote replication of it, according to Saussurean assumptions, literature is literary *in relation* to other discourse in which the poetic function is less important. And only to the degree that the phenomenal world is itself a discourse does literature have a less than arbitrary relation to it.

Nor will the problem disappear when Scholes turns to application if his definition of the literary object has such contradictions in it. To the task of discussing contemporary poems, poems particularly resistant to conventional analysis, he brings a range of Continental thinkers, prominent among whom are Yuri Lotman and Michael Riffaterre, who, he claims, "are not so far apart as they seem." His strategy, once again, is to do away with the differences between semiotics and interpretation, but to achieve this objective it is clear that he must generalize semiotic procedures beyond recognition. He looks to the poem to supply its own metalanguage; he translates the poem into his own prose paraphrase; and when the narrative he constructs achieves a degree of coherence in its own right, we are to assume he has taken us at least a step closer to the original, the signified, or the truth. Upon such belief in the essential continuity among metalanguage, language, and object, as well as the essential autonomy each of these achieve in

an idealist hierarchy, depends traditional interpretation. Such a theory of language goes against the principles that have developed from Saussurean linguistics including those identified with structuralism, semiotics, and poststructuralism, where it is generally held that by supplementing the text with an interpretation, one does not recover the original but displaces the text. Nor is there any original to recover, for that matter, for according to this theory, poetry, too, would be already an interpretation of some other language, poetic or otherwise. By transforming the poem into a transparent and familiar narrative, as Scholes does, for example, in describing one of Gary Snyder's poems as "a parallel structure of binary opposition brought to closure in the single memorable image of the cantankerous mare under the untamable tree," one actually grows blind to its intertextuality.

Evident though it is in every one of Scholes's interpretations, the problem arising from the inherent conflict of terms in his book is perhaps most apparent in the last chapter, "Uncoding Mama: The Female Body as Text." True to his promise that "Certain signs of sexuality as they function in language, in psychoanalytic discourse, and in literature are the main objects of this study," Scholes documents instances throughout cultural history where language is used to rewrite nature, centering sexual pleasure, sometimes even through surgical erasure, in the vagina where it complements rather than supplements the male organ. But Scholes ultimately displaces one mystification of the body with another when he slips into the very kind of language against which his own argument is originally aimed, language that turns nature into culture and the woman's body into a text. After demonstrating that such textualization is politically oppressive, to say the least, he locates the true source of pleasure in the clitoris, the one "place," so to speak, that, while generally excluded from representations of the body, is nevertheless a carefully zoned and partial mapping of the female. By abandoning the theoretical terminology that would have kept him mindful of the text as a text, Scholes turns against the basic objectives of a semiotic approach.

If we do not know where Scholes finally stands, inside or outside the domain of literary interpretation, or to which kind of competence, semiotic or literary, he owes his moments of insight, it is also impossible to identify Scholes's reader. On the one hand, *Semiotics and Interpretation* deals with some of the more familiar and adaptable models for literary analysis and strives to deal with them as straightforwardly as possible. For this reason, however, the book cannot be expected to educate the practiced semiotician. With the exception of his last chapter, on the other hand, Scholes gives no indication that his demonstrations of theory contribute anything new to literary scholarship. Scholes's frequent disclaimers that he does not have time to pursue a topic in depth "here," together with his regular attempts at minimizing the differences, say, between semiotics and the work of Chicago Aristotelians, or among Lotman, Riffaterre and the American New Critics, comprise a rhetoric that can only be aimed at amateurs from both camps. In all fairness, however, *Semiotics and Interpretation* appears to be filling a need of a different order, for it resembles a number of books that have come out of late, all of which aim not at proving the virtues of semiotics over and above traditional criticism or vice versa, but at ending the conflict between competing modes of critical discourse. One might take this as a sign that the debate over which mode of critical activity ought to prevail in literature departments, a debate that has



shaped the discipline for over a decade, is dissolving into a form of transactional ("I'm okay, you're okay") analysis. Such denial of differences is no doubt a way for semiotics to gain authority within the domain of traditional interpretation, but it is, as Scholes demonstrates, a way of altering the procedures and objectives of semiotics as well.

NANCY ARMSTRONG

*Wayne State University*

*The Art of Laughter* by Neil Schaeffer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981. Pp. 166. \$18.50.

*Discovering the Comic* by George McFadden. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982. Pp. 268. \$19.00.

*Laughing, A Psychology of Humor* by Norman H. Holland. Ithaca, New York and London, England: Cornell University Press, 1982. Pp. 223. \$16.95.

Comic theory is almost a genre unto itself within criticism, a form of writing with its own special characteristics and hobby-horses. Books that define the comic, humor, or laughter repeat themselves in form as well as subject matter, while what they intend, of course, is to avoid repeating themselves. The problem is in part the vast amount of comic theory which must be surveyed to avoid repetition of ideas, but this produces the most repetitive part of these books, the survey itself which often becomes the largest single section of such discussions. Each critic summarizes and classifies comic theory from Plato and Aristotle to the present, sometimes briefly, sometimes with meticulous detail, then dismisses it all as interesting but too limited adequately to define the full scope of the subject. Each critic proposes his own theory which he expects will solve the problem once and for all, sometimes borrowing a key insight from the work of an earlier theorist. In the past fifty years Freud has been the most popular influence in Anglo-American comic theory.

What happens is comically predictable, for each critic's theory has the same fate, becoming a brief discussion in the next book of comic theory which will start the process all over again. If repetition is a basic characteristic of the comic, then so is it a basic characteristic of the inquiry into the comic, an inquiry that parodies itself by failing so badly at learning from its own history. Its history is nearly 2,500 years of failure to explain the comic to anyone's satisfaction for very long, surely enough indication that the problem is not ultimately answerable. But critics of the comic do not discourage easily, and what Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, Cornford, and Frye have failed at might still be possible of solution. This too is a comic characteristic, incredible optimism in the face of discouraging reality, but perhaps it is only right that the kind of comic heroism these critics celebrate in their texts they demonstrate by their texts. Certainly comic theorists deserve respect as well as gentle ridicule, for there is real value in what they do, not so much in their search for universal definitions, as in their discussions of individual areas of the comic

where important issues are raised and examined. Their criticism does reveal the ways in which the comic is conceived at any one time, and the importances that are attached to it. The search for general eternal truth does finally lead to specific historically limited insight—the 2,500 years of failure is also a tradition rich in this kind of accomplishment.

Three books that have recently appeared make very uneven contributions to this tradition and this genre of criticism. All three begin with the problem of comic theory, presenting three different classification schemes. All three propose new definitions of laughter and the comic response, arguing that these conceptions are radically new ways of understanding the subject. (And one, *Discovering The Comic*, suggests that it is a breakthrough of the sort Thomas Kuhn discusses in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as a paradigm shift.) All three acknowledge the influence of earlier theorists, particularly Freud. And while there are some overlaps, all three do not agree. Norman Holland's *Laughing, A Psychology of Humor* is potentially the most important, although his book will also be the most difficult for literary critics to use because it calls into question the assumptions that critics make about the ways in which readers respond to the comic in a text, and the ways in which a text can be considered comic.

Holland begins with an extensive survey of comic theory that takes up the first half of the book, dividing the material into five categories, explanations by stimuli, by conditions, by psychology, by physiology, and by catharsis. Holland presents his own theorizing in the second half, which is based on the close observation of a number of his graduate students as they laughed at cartoons, and were then interviewed by him. One of those case studies appears in detail. Holland argues that an individual laugher finds confirmation of a part of his identity in the act of laughing at a comic object, and that a comic response is therefore highly individual, impossible to make generalizations about in a meaningful way. The multitude of comic theories have explained the multitude of ways in which individuals laugh, but no single explanation is any more correct than another. Holland also finds a rough correlation between four of his categories of theory and what he considers to be four categories of common psychological response to the world, expectation, defense, fantasy, and transformation. As an individual manifests one of these responses, he laughs in a way described by one of the varieties of comic theory. The argument is provocative, and extremely important, for it suggests that all a literary critic can do is offer one highly idiosyncratic interpretation of a comic text, one that would have little meaning or validity for any other reader. The alternatives are not clear, unless it be the attempt to generate as many readings as possible based on Holland's four categories of theory and reader response, something that may become possible with computer assisted criticism. The argument that Holland presents needs to be taken very seriously, and Holland, to his credit, presents it gently, even playfully at times. The book occasionally challenges the reader to laugh, and thus to continue the process of introspection.

George McFadden's *Discovering The Comic* is a less successful study of very similar material. It also contains an extensive survey of comic theory, which makes up most of the book, and it similarly divides this theory into five categories, although what Holland classifies psychologically, McFadden classifies historically, into classical, romantic, modern, twentieth century, and Nietzschean. McFadden argues that comic theory is both a history of change (the most important being

the transition from classic to romantic) and of continuity. The change provides McFadden with his historical periods, and the continuity with his definition of the comic which he calls a "mode of aesthetic consciousness" marked by "continuance of itself and freedom in relation to a continued threat of alteration" (p. 4). McFadden's book is extremely ambitious, for it is a history of comic theory, an argument for a definition of the comic, a reading of selected comic texts, and an attempt to relate all of this to phenomenological, structuralist, and post-structuralist thought. But the book simply attempts too many things and ends up doing too few of them very well. Discussions of individual theorists are often first rate, and readings of the comic texts quite interesting, but the definition of the comic is not new, the history so randomly selective as to lack credibility, and the discussion of literary criticism poorly integrated into the other aspects of the study. The definition, for example, is very similar to a number of others that have been suggested before, most notably by Ernst Kris, the psychoanalytic critic generally familiar to American literary critics, but although McFadden discusses Freud extensively, and one other psychoanalytic critic, there is no mention of Kris or his theory. The definition is also close to many recent discussions of the comic hero, who after all is a figure that remains himself, and remains free, in the face of threats of alteration, but McFadden simply has not looked very carefully at works published on the comic in the last twenty years, at works by Whitman, Torrance, or Gurewitch.

His history is heavily dependent on essays written by Schiller at the end of the eighteenth century, and while McFadden freely acknowledges the debt, he offers no justification for his wholesale borrowing other than his belief that this one comic theorist was essentially correct. The history McFadden also acknowledges is selective, but it is in fact random, and so many major critics are either dismissed in a sentence or ignored that the credibility of historical argument can never develop. McFadden discusses no critic between Shaftesbury and Hazlitt, dismisses Meredith in a line, makes no mention at all of Baudelaire. He makes the German romantics central to his case, and while he discusses Schiller in detail, he ignores the Schlegel brothers and Richter, and while he discusses Hegel and Kierkegaard at some length, he only concerns himself with Kierkegaard's first book of irony, ignoring the half dozen others that make extensive study of the comic and humor. Certainly comic theory may fit McFadden's reading of it, but given the ways in which he treats the evidence, it is impossible to tell. He seems to have worried more about post-structuralist critics questioning the relevance of his inquiry, than about critics of comedy who will be the main audience for the book. Thus the book is full of provocative statements about comic theory and about comedy that are never carefully supported, while the marginal relevance of Ingarten, Todorov, and Barthes to the inquiry is made the subject of lengthy digressions, these written in a totally different style of discourse. But post-structuralist critics are not going to read this book without wondering why Derrida's own sense of play is ignored, or why McFadden has tried to write old fashioned intellectual history of the kind discredited by Foucault.

Neil Schaeffer's *The Art of Laughter* does much better, in part because it is more modest in scope. Schaeffer argues that "laughter results from an incongruity presented in a ludicrous context" (p. 17), and while the definition seems ordinary, much of Schaeffer's discussion is excellent. He deals with comic theory

only marginally, in a single short chapter, dividing it into theory that sees humor as the creation of individuals, and theory that sees reality as laughable in itself. There is no attempt to do more than present a few representative examples, for what Schaeffer is really interested in is a phenomenological return to the comic things themselves, to simple jokes and to the experience of laughter. The first half of the book, a careful examination of laughter, jokes, and the comic context, is among the very finest we have on the subject. Schaeffer reads with sensitivity and insight. He argues that what is most important is the comic context, as distinguished from either style or content, the signal to us to take the object as comic. This can be something as straightforward as the announcement "This is a joke" or as complex as the behaviors a Shakespearean clown acts out before his fellow characters within a play. What Schaeffer is led to again and again is this examination of context are the ways in which laughter and the comic evade rational explanation, and the numerous different readings of a joke that have equal validity. The point of course is similar to Holland's. In the second half of the book, Schaeffer reads the comic context in performance (Lenny Bruce) in a novel (*Tristram Shandy*) and in a play ("As You Like It"), but here he does exactly what the first half of the book has argued against, the individual reading. Demonstrating context, he is in fact presenting single interpretations of the comic works under consideration, and the distinctions between style, content, and context break down rather quickly. The interpretations are all clear and intelligent, but they are much less exciting than what has come in the first half of the book. Schaeffer's practical criticism is not nearly as good as his theoretical explorations. Fortunately the first half of the book can stand on its own.

RICHARD KELLER SIMON

*University of Texas, Austin*

*Poetics of the Holy: A Reading of Paradise Lost* by Michael Lieb. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981. Pp. xxi + 442. \$28.00.

It is a proposition one would not cavil with (especially were a reply likely to be lengthy) that everything is connected to "the Holy"—if only through opposition as the "profane." Michael Lieb demonstrates some of those connections in *The Poetics of the Holy*, a book with many strengths and some weaknesses. He proposes that Milton thought of himself as a priest ministering to *res sacra* and then shows how various motifs in *Paradise Lost*—fruit, place, mount, name, light, presence, war and rest—are parts of traditions of the sacred.

Lieb, seeking "universal" features of Milton's vision, begins with Mircea Eliade and the historicist analysis of Rudolf Otto, who posits a development from non-moral to moral conceptions of the holy and a development from cultic worship, of external signs, to ethical behavior, where a sense of the holy is internalized. This paradigm works well for the radically Protestant Milton, but like the historical analysis of the "traditional" and "modern" family, this paradigm also involves one in anachronism, since an "historical" account reveals "early" forms of the holy side-by-side with more "developed" forms today.

Though Milton hated "old Priest" even more than "new Presbyter," Lieb is right that he did clearly think of himself as a non-cultic priest ministering to holy things. Much else which Lieb proposes also makes basic good sense. He nicely highlights the Kierkegaardian terror and joy—that early, ambivalent response to the holy—in the phrase "the sacred Fruit forbidden." And he sets Stanley Fish's point, that God's prohibition of the fruit is non-rational, in the context of the holy, showing that the lack of rationality is not purely rhetorical strategy but an exactment of holy mystery. He elucidates Old Testament interest in enclosed places and in mountain tops, setting Milton within both traditions. Silently yet with apparent care, Lieb refrains from using "Milton's God" to refer to "the Father"; in addition, his analysis of "names" includes an explanation of why Milton's muse has so mysteriously many. Lieb also accounts for Hellenic sun worship, sharpening that with an analysis of Old Testament accounts of the presence of the deity in flaming, colorful visions and hymns to light. He shows the Puritan shaping of Old Testament ideas about holy war, adding that "to stand" in Milton may suggest both "withstanding" and military "regrouping." He finally underlines the appeal of the eternal and military "regrouping." He finally underlines the appeal of the eternal Sabbath rest to Milton.

Lieb is particularly helpful when discussing Old Testament patterns in Milton. For brevity, let me suggest this pervasive contribution with two relatively small examples. First, Lieb has patiently tracked Milton's proof-texts, in *De Doctrina Christiana*—e.g., concerning the "glory" of the divine chariot (pp. 233-4) and "holy war" (pp. 268-9)—to show Milton's particular reading of the Bible. Study of the patterns of Milton's biblical citations, like study of the patterns of his heresies, seems a fruitful field for future, if time-consuming, study—though there is no need to use Sumner's translation when Carey's is so much better. Also, Lieb uses Milton's translations of the Psalms (a narrow room indeed for the translator) to show Milton's sensibility concerning holy war. This Old Testament discussion is perhaps Lieb's greatest strength.

Lieb is not so helpful when discussing universals or traditions which do not show us "the Miltonic" or which, infrequently, have little to do with Milton at all. Lieb makes the point himself occasionally, as when he turns from Robert Fludd to "traditions that are no doubt more nearly in keeping with Milton's own temperament" (p. 208)—a remark made in the chapter about Hellenic interest in light. It is sometimes hard to understand the relationship between Milton and an author or group of authors, as for example "such exegetes as Christianus Adrichomius" (p. 160). Again, since Lieb knows that a "sense of the poem as the vehicle of worship . . . underlies all poetry written in the sacred vein," we do not need to have Herbert's *The Temple*, Harvey's *The Synagogue*, and Crashaw's *The Steps to the Temple* all cited to show that *Paradise Lost* is an act of worship, since they are "the products of entirely different traditions, not to mention temperaments" (p. 84). These may seem quibbles, but they are the unfortunate excess of the effort to find "universals" in Milton. Lieb sheds less light on Milton when discussing Jungian archetypes (pp. 120-1) than he does when he explains the four-sided shape of the Temple and of Israel's battle-formations and the "Quadrate" formation of the faithful angels in *Paradise Lost*.

Another of Lieb's "universals" is the "Christocentric" nature of *Paradise Lost*. What genuinely Christian poem is not Christocentric? If the term means anything

more than "Christian," the proleptic Christianity of *Paradise Lost* would not seem Christocentric. For example, the idea that penetrating holy places may be Christocentric doesn't seem to fit the shape of the whole. True, Adam and Eve inhabit an "inmost bowr," and Satan penetrates that place in a profane parody of the priestly function, and the Son brings Adam and Eve's prayers before "the Father's Throne." True, we may see the last as anticipating a spiritualization of cultic practices, Christ's ultimate penetration, and that of the Christian adept. No doubt it is true that "with this Christocentric emphasis, *Paradise Lost* becomes a work in which the penetration of a divine enclosure may be viewed from a number of perspectives" (p. 139), since that says little, but books x, xi, and xii conclude the poem on the note of expulsion. Milton's temperament led him to conclude the poem before depicting these final penetrations.

Lieb continues his interest in parody as a mode in *Paradise Lost*. Satanic efforts to establish a throne, to penetrate enclosures, to make war, etc. parody the acts of the true priest, and show a profane sensibility. More might be made, or made overtly, however, of the often frightening similarities between Satan and presumably unfallen characters—including the narrator—along the lines which William Riggs has suggested. The holy is mysterious and one's sense of it can be only partial. I may therefore miss Lieb's intent, for, appropriately to his subject, he seldom clearly announces his critical purpose. He seems to be suggesting that the poem is at once bipolar (i.e., expressing a rationalized, "moral" distinction between clearly opposed good and evil) and ambivalent. Thus, one is tempted to ask: how can we distinguish between a sacred and a profane penetration of enclosures? The answer may well be that the "old" dual feelings of terror and joy do inform this poem and make the distinction impossible. Such matters of critical purpose might have been sharpened by pruning this lengthy book.

If Lieb is attempting in part to show that early, anarchic ambivalence in *Paradise Lost*, it is a manifestation of a kind of sly or mild subversiveness which also emerged in his previous, Eriksonian analysis of such matters as anality in the epic. Here, a small and a larger subversion might be noted. Lieb seems to suggest that Adam and Eve's "inmost bowr" is the central enclosure in a temple-like structure of enclosures in Eden. Though Satan, "through a series of penetrations," may have reached "the inmost enclosure" to make Eve dream (p. 135), one is left wondering whether Adam might have penetrated still further and whether Lieb is not hinting at a new, Miltonic sense of the "holy of holies." More generally, "the holy" is not a rational commodity nor does the experience of it admit self-consciousness. We generally see the craft and control of the epic, being literary critics, yet at times Lieb shows us what may be the basic tension in *Paradise Lost* by pointing out the opposite pole of Milton's writing—the hierophantic drive, the inspired or literally enthusiastic element which also informs Milton's vision.

In the "Introduction" and "Afterword," Lieb proposes a theoretical distinction between "paradigmatic" analyses of Milton—as a "rationalist" and "Puritan"—and his own interest in the "universal." He is correct that Malcolm Ross would term those paradigms a Protestant secularization of Milton and of literary criticism. In taking Ross as final arbiter, however, he might have reflected that Ross would also find Otto's theory of "development" equally Protestant and paradigmatic. Ross seems to appear in this important place because Lieb views his own efforts as a gesture of faith as well. I believe there are few students of Milton

ready to make the theological commitment which Lieb here suggests (or which seems to inform William Kerrigan's book, to mention one other), and this sharp distinction may tend to exclude many from appreciating the sense of mystery Lieb develops.

But more important, the ordering of Lieb's chapters, leading up to the later ones, implies a far more subtle approach than this bi-polar formulation of "paradigms" and "universals." Moving through Hebraic and Hellenic traditions, Lieb unites them to specifically seventeenth-century (in this case, Puritanic) modes, culminating in the penultimate chapter on war. That is, Lieb combines analysis of "the universal" and numinous with analysis of more parochial, "Nonconformist and iconoclastic impulses" (p. 328). To show what distinguishes an author, one must establish some common basis before differentiation can begin. Lieb may well be correct that some "paradigmatic" critics—myself included—have attended too carefully to the particularities and not spent time focusing upon the common and shared among religious authors. But that oversight has, in the last few years, been more than corrected—e.g., by Barbara Lewalski's discussion of a common, Protestant aesthetic underlying seventeenth-century religious writing. Balance, in these undertakings, is difficult. It is good to see Lieb's book, considered as a whole, showing a balance by attending both to common, shared "traditions" developing over centuries and to particular, parochial modes contemporary to Milton.

BOYD BERRY

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

*Edwardian Fiction* by Jefferson Hunter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982. Pp. xi + 280. \$17.50.

Jefferson Hunter's *Edwardian Fiction* is of the school of Hippolyte Taine's *Histoire de la Littérature anglaise* (1863). He elucidates the fiction of the major Edwardians—Forster, Wells, James, Galsworthy, Bennett, Kipling—by placing it in its proper milieu, moment, and race. The moment is, of course, the reign of Edward VII, the first ten years of our century. Hunter characterizes the period as a milieu of indecision represented by Balfour's *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt* (1879). Confusion marks Edwardian Times, as real wages drop, slums and motor cars spread, the military misadventures of the Boer war come home, and women's suffrage and the Labour party gain headway. False simplifications of the era suggest that it was merely a period of disillusionment or, to the contrary, only the golden autumn of privilege and luxury. Neither of these views is sufficiently complex for Hunter. The milieu shows change in all features of social organization, conduct, and systems of belief. Fiction was a method to cope with such bewildering innovation.

Hunter argues that the Edwardian novel is conservative in its form, but innovative in its subjects, which reflect a basic preoccupation with the changes occurring in the decade. Edwardian novelists inherited the idea that a novel must be organized on a plot. Hunter suggests that the only innovation in form found

in their novels was to struggle against that tyranny. An author might become digressive, admitting wayward impressions into the text which are not necessary to the plot. Such works Hunter calls "impressionist," an idea of literary impressionism which may seem to some readers too simple and not adequate to account for the formal creativity of Conrad or Ford Madox Ford. A second kind of formal innovation Hunter finds when the author thwarts the expectations of the conventional reader. For example, when Conrad distorts the time scheme of *Nostramo* so as to avoid the normal rhythms of suspense and resolution in the common adventure tale. The third type of formal innovation involves the shift of attention from the story to the process of narration, to the "drama of the telling." Hunter sees such developments in form as relatively feeble. He argues that the "two most salient facts about Edwardian fiction [are] thematic adventurousness and formal conservatism" (viii). Many readers of the masterpieces of James, Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, and their contemporaries feel, however, that what is most interesting about their works is precisely their formal experimentation—unreliable and limited narration, psychological time, deliberate ambiguity and internal contradiction, texts written so as to require a highly constructive participation of the reader in the interpretive encounter. Compared to these formal novelties, which add up to the beginning of the modernist revolution, many readers may feel that the "thematic adventurousness" of the Edwardians is rather less impressive than Hunter maintains.

Hunter examines much of the coterie fiction and the best-sellers of the period. It is illuminating to see Erskine Childer's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), Robert Hichen's *The Garden of Allah* (1905), and H. G. Wells' *Tono-Bungay* (1909) classified as typical "parables of escape from the dark, confining streets of London" (79). Hunter sees these works providing a common topos of Edwardian temperament, a desire to move from the known to unknown, from realism to adventure, which Hunter calls "fictional escapism." The thematic innovation which he finds so important to the era consists in going abroad, departing out of England to strange settings, and the concomitant return homeward, disillusioned with imperialism and human nature itself. In this thematic preoccupation, the Edwardian adventurer enters a vast, empty landscape, a depopulated earth, becoming an Adamic figure, as in H. De Vere Stacpoole's *The Blue Lagoon* (1908), Wells's *In the Days of the Comet*, and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostramo*. But the experience of real imperialism was not as satisfying and predictable as the myth. The theme of adventure became vastly more complicated as it was seen to entail economic and other consequences. Historically in the decade there were three challenges to the imperial myth: revelation of the true conditions in the Belgian Congo, the Boer War, and the Parliamentary victory in 1906 of the Liberal party. These take expression in the Edwardian nightmare of venturing out into a world of violence followed by a disillusioned return. Conrad's works loom large here, with Lord Jim's tale of cowardice rehabilitated compared to A. E. W. Mason's *The Four Feathers* (1902) and Marlowe's illusion-saving in *Heart of Darkness* growing out of the "inspiration-from-afar ethos" of an array of popular novels. As a consequence of disillusionment, many works focus on withdrawal, retreat, recession, and coming home to England. Repossession, xenophobia, the English country house as refuge and trap, are thematic concerns of Galsworthy's Forsythe novels, as well as some of the major works of James, Bennett, Wells, and Forster.



There is a quiet charm to Hunter's study as he takes his readers back to visit James at home in Rye or Conrad at Pent farm, back to the election of 1906, and back to a world that read novels by Guy Thorne, Marie Correlli, or Anthony Hope. Not only is Hunter's study *about* the Edwardian era, it *is* Edwardian. He frees his mind of the clouds of deconstructivity, of the dizzy structuralist explosion from *Tel Quel* in the 1960s, of Russian formalism, of Marxist imperatives, even of the New Critical attention to the text. Such simplification of method allows him to amble through a large number of masterpieces and the dwarf wood of popular fiction and to argue quite convincingly that these major texts are the product of their age and could not likely have been written at another time in another culture. On the other hand, Hunter's method produces some disturbing turns of phrase. Consider this sentence, "After recovering from their fin-de-siècle weariness, Edwardians looked about them and discovered a plentitude of fictional subjects not yet honestly attempted" (61). We need hardly point out the unwary personification of weary Edwardians looking about for a fictional subject in order to make an honest attempt at it. Rather than talking about features of a text, Hunter quite frequently erects a personification of the age or of the collective artist and explores its inner emotional life and motivation. Such critical methodology is similar to that found in Osbert Burdett's *The Last Ten Years of English Literature* (1907), cited by Hunter himself as typical Edwardian literary criticism.

Frequently, Hunter draws generalizations at a very abstract level. For example, he says the Edwardians wrote while subject to a number of contradictions with little indication of any clear-cut direction or outcome. They felt "an abundance of polarities: the city versus the country, little England versus the empire, Peter Pan versus the Five Towns, the life of telegrams and anger versus the life of personal relations" (73). At the beginning of his final chapter, he softens his argument by observing that quite a few writers manage to defy such polar classification, but his usual personification of the age leads to attribution of broad patterns of behaviour and thought which are ill-fitting in many individual cases. Is it true that between 1900 and 1910 "the novelist stops writing adventures abroad and starts writing about the experience of coming home" (235)? What does Hunter hope to gain as a scholar of literature by fitting James, Conrad, Bennett, or Galsworthy to the procrustean shape of *the novelist* in his sentence?

Along with the personification of the age and a tendency toward overly broad generalization, Hunter falls into a disturbing vagueness while talking about the real and the symbolic. For example, he describes the house party given by Stephen Crane to celebrate Christmas 1899 at Brede Place. Coming on the eve of the first decade of the twentieth century, "The Crane's party is a symbolic moment—almost a public declaration of Edwardianism" (9). By *symbol* presumably he means a visible sign of some invisible condition, the spirit of the age, which becomes apparent in a correlation between the visible vehicle (the party) and the invisible tenor (the spirit). *Symbolic* bears such a meaning when he discusses the "awakening from passivity and a symbolic drowning" (227) in Wells's *The Sea Lady*, Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, and T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock*. In the fictional cases a character awakens to drown, so that the sleep of illusion and fantasy is depicted as life preserving. When Hunter calls something *symbolic*, he enters the dangerous arena of intentionality. The meaning of the discourse

is considered to be representational, to intend something beyond its literal signification. But to read history as an intentional symbolic system, making dinner parties vehicles for an imagined tenor, Spirit-of-the-Age, is a complicated affair not to be undertaken in an off-hand manner. To read a fictional text as symbolic usually implies that the language intends a meaning on two levels, on more apparent than the other. To treat historical events on symbolic, however, introduces confusing levels of discourse, mixing the phenomenal with the mental. Does the undeniable reality of the dinner party lend any substance to the somewhat more airy notion of the personified Edwardian spirit, or is the dinner merely an illustration of Hunter's imagined construction? If merely illustrative of Hunter's own ideas, what suasive value should it be allowed?

TODD K. BENDER

*University of Wisconsin, Madison*

*The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers* by Lawrence Lipking.  
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. Pp. xvi + 243. \$20.00.

It is hard to know which has contributed more to our reluctance to talk about a poet's life—the twentieth century fashion of regarding poems as autonomous objects or a spate of unreadable biographies that tell us everything about a poet but what we want to know. Then just when it seemed that both phenomena were becoming anachronisms, our most influential commentators found reasons why critical discourse should discount, in Eliot's words, not only the "man who suffers," but "the mind which creates." Henceforth, we are told, we must reject the beckoning of any authorial presence—even Poulet's *moi*, that ghostly emanation from the poet's work—as coolly as a scientist at a seance rejects a magic lantern spook.

At least one of these stern masters, however, has abandoned his skepticism and now writes with renewed vigor about the poet and his poems. So last summer, in the same magazine in which Richard Poirier was "Writing off the Self," Harold Bloom urged us to understand what happens when a poet writes a poem as we would understand what happens to a patient in psychoanalysis or to a lover when he falls in love. Poems, according to Bloom, like these other remakings of ourselves are "erotic choices and rejections . . . transactions in power, authority, and tradition, and not just interplays of language."

Lawrence Lipking, in *The Life of Poetry*, gives us another, albeit less daring, post-structuralist attempt to describe the life that poets live in their work. The catch is this: aware of the problems of "associating the stages of poetic life with the stages of human life in general," Lipking restricts his discussion to "the life that all poets share": the inherited codes of "their vocation as poets." Nor do his self-imposed limitations end there. The fish in Lipking's pond are not simply poets but "poets of destiny"—the classics, the ones who have stayed the course and who have been initiated into the religion of greatness.

The life of the poet in these cases is special. It begins when an aspirant learns to read his apprentice work, when he "realizes that his own personal history, reflected in his poems, coincides with the universal spiritual history of mankind." Dante in the *Vita Nuova*, Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Yeats in

*Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, each discovers a "method of reading" that casts light on the root meaning of his own writing and the world and prophesies his expansive later works. Then, if he survives, the poet's prophecy is achieved in a long poem (*Four Quartets*, *Faust*, the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, *The Death of Virgil*) that puts his affairs in order and sums up everything he has done. In the extreme example, the *Aeneid*, the work will do more, will crown a tradition and, in the process, as Eliot said, exhaust the ground it cultivates, so that it becomes impossible to produce another great work of the same kind.

This, then, is poetry with a vengeance, but, given the fastidiousness of the categories of selection combined with a certain arbitrariness about examples, I found myself wondering what it all had to do with life. Especially when I realized that Lipking had side-stepped several awkward but central instances of the making of a poet. He considers Eliot and Whitman, for example, late in their careers, well after the psychological upheavals that launched them. And so he makes no reference to the non-literary pressures that transformed Walter Whitman, Esq., into "Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos." Nor does he speak of that turbulent moment when Eliot found his voice—a moment which, if it involved reading, involved a good deal more than Eliot's reading the book of himself. The experience as Eliot described it was more like a sudden "profound kinship, or rather a peculiar personal intimacy" with a dead author. "It is certainly a crisis," Eliot wrote, "and when a young writer is seized with his first passion of this sort he may be changed, metamorphosed almost, within a few weeks even, from a bundle of second-hand sentiments into a person."

Shying away from evidence like this, Lipking's book cannot enlighten us in any definitive way about "the life of the poet." As a study of the "beginning and ending (of selected) poetic careers," though, it is a work of great elegance and perceptiveness. Lipking says in his introduction that he wishes the book to stand or fall on the quality of its readings, and, by that criterion, it stands quite high. Its discussion of the *Aeneid* alone would be enough to recommend it. A selection will have to suffice: to show us the life Virgil lived in the poem, Lipking first suggests how the affinities between Virgil's own experience and the experience of the heroes of whom he sings. Like Aeneas, Virgil possesses above all the virtue of "patience, the willingness to sacrifice anything he owns for the sake of fathering something great." And like Aeneas, he lacks an essential element of independence: all his "assignments are commissioned, all his emotions predictable . . . he obeys [an inherited] plot."

But the figure of Turnus provides a more salient (and a more poignant) analogue. Heaving a great stone against Aeneas in *Aeneid XII*, Turnus lifts a weight and reminds us of his creator's Homeric burden: his action mirrors Achilles' in *Iliad XX* and Diomedes' in *Iliad V*, with two exceptions. The stone falls short of its target, and its Virgilian manifestation gives us a reason—or rather a symbol—for the failure. Unspecified in Homer, in the *Aeneid* the stone is a boundary stone, a primary instrument of peace and cultivation. No wonder Turnus fails; "a stone-age savage who obeys no law but strength . . . he cannot survive in the Roman world, where piety is due even to the stones. The boundaries abide in Virgil. The battlefields of the *Aeneid* were farms once, and one day will be Rome—the place of law." How terribly, Lipking notes, Virgil must have lived that lesson: "Knowledge like this can inhibit action. When every line sustains

a burden of time and history, each line weighs as heavy as Turnus' stone, and for the same reason: it must adjudicate among conflicting claims. At every moment Virgil must check his impulse against the master plan, the epic tradition, the laws of piety, his own past work. A poet who taxes himself this way can barely manage to lift a few lines into place each day. And no poem deals more thoroughly than the *Aeneid* with the constraints that piety puts on action."

Almost as intriguing, Lipking's treatment of *Four Quartets* reveals more about his book's controlling assumptions. Proceeding from the *Aeneid* by way of Wallace Stevens, he considers what happens when a poet attempts a culminating work and comes face to face with his inadequacies. "The poet is left, in the end, with himself; with the disparity between the instrument he plays and the ever-receding harmonium toward which he aspires." This was Eliot's situation, and his theme. Even the music of the *Quartets* "sounds broken" and testifies "to the poet's difficulty in finding a significant unity in his work. He struggles to begin. So much was expected of Eliot—and he produced so little. Eventually he cured his writer's block by writing about it. But he never became quite comfortable with his role as master. A sense of the ridiculous hovers, often, just out of sight—the ridiculousness of trying to redeem the 'waste sad time.'" The scene of "Burnt Norton" "owes much to Kipling's 'They,' a story about an estate haunted by ghosts of children. Kipling, who had recently lost his own daughter, stresses parental affliction, the need for a last fading communication with those who have gone. But Eliot's position seems closer to that of the blind woman who owns the estate, privileged to be visited by ghostly children because she never had children of her own. It is the unborn—the might-have-been children who never were, the poems that have never been written, the Christian society that never happened, the serene and masterly old age that never arrived—who come to Eliot's haunting. See, they return. All the missed opportunities of life assemble in *Four Quartets*. Now that life is almost past, the time that was wasted reproaches the poet with all that he has not done."

Recognizing how Virgilian expectations conditioned Eliot's final masterpiece, then, Lipking helps explain the impulse in "Little Gidding" to complete and renew the past, "transfigured in another pattern." In that poem, Eliot "redeems a series of old phrases, images, into a new creation." Yet, Lipking maintains, as in Virgil, "such consolation is not achieved without a cost. By finding a place for everything—even his despair—in the pattern, Eliot used up all the resources of his poetry. . . . During the twenty years he was still to live he would write no more major poems. Later poets have taken the point . . . the *Quartets* were not a place to start from. They founded no idiom, they fathered no school. Instead they represent the poet's last testament—timeless, the work of a master."

According to Lipking, it was inevitable. For any poet who does not rebel (as Whitman and Broch did) against the code of the vocation, this is how "the life of the poet" ends. It is an illuminating observation, and yet finally it is belied by the facts. Although it has not long been apparent, the *Quartets* began as much as they ended. Never further to be exploited by Eliot himself, the sense of play opened up by the *Quartets'* self-consciously dissonant style marks not simply the culmination of his work but the beginnings of postmodernism. Yes, the *Quartets* founded no idiom, but it is difficult to imagine the school of Ashbery without them. Which is rather comforting. As telling as Lipking's generalizations are, they could not be more grim. It is a relief to believe that the life of the poet is

not the exhausting circuit of his portrait. Surely, in Yeats' words, it is also "self-delighting, self-appeasing, self-affrighting." Else our truest image of the poet would be not simply Virgil but Brunetto Latini, circling the burning sands.

RONALD BUSH

*Harvard University*

*Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry: Richest to the Richest* by Cairns Craig. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982. Pp. 323. \$19.95.

When William Hazlitt argued in his well-known piece on *Coriolanus* that "the language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power" he acutely located a problem which has particular resonance with regard to modernist poetry. For related though somewhat different reasons, the historical authors of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (1920), "The Waste Land" (1922), and *The Tower* (1928), all might well have agreed with Hazlitt's explicit (and for him troubling) formulation that the faculty of the imagination is by its very nature "aristocratical" and "monopolising," and that "the principle of poetry is a very anti-levelling principle." And yet Yeats's ambition to "speak out of a people to a people," Pound's strong injunction to "Make it New," and Eliot's radical break with the immediate literary past in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" all seem to jostle and contradict a necessarily aristocratic theory of poetic language. Indeed, the central and apparent paradox of the Yeats, Eliot and Pound enterprises is how their early innovative and revolutionary poetics can be reconciled to their later socially conservative and reactionary politics. It was after all the *enfant terrible* and primary theorist of both Imagism and Vorticism who would one day argue in *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* that "the heritage of Jefferson . . . is HERE, NOW in the Italian Peninsula—at the beginning of the second fascist decennium. . . ." Similarly, it was the young American poet whose first book sounded the death knell on the poetic style of the late nineteenth century who would later announce in *After Strange Gods* that "reasons of race and culture combine to make a large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable" in the ideal Christian society. And so, too, it was the Anglo-Irish poet who more than any other writer in the twentieth century refashioned the central English romantic tradition into a high modernist mold who would one day write in support of General O'Duffy's Blue Shirts that "I find myself constantly urging the despotic rule of the educated classes as the only end to our troubles. . . ." The question of the relationship between the modernity of our poetry and the reactionary nature of their politics is of the utmost importance to our understanding of Yeats's, Eliot's and Pound's work, and it has come into clear focus only recently. Cairns Craig's ambitious book specifically sets out to explore and explain the relationship and as such it is a solid contribution to our understanding of literary modernism.

Craig's central argument is that the concept of memory can serve as the bridge that links modernist poetry and politics. Yeats, Eliot, and Pound believed that the world had essentially lost its memory in the four slaughterous years of World War I and much of their subsequent work was a rescue operation for the lost historical world of the past, though how they set out to recover that world was

wholly different: Yeats through a visionary poetics and elaborate historical mythology, Eliot through an essentially meditative, religious poetics alive with "the historical sense," and Pound in a long "poem including history" which set out to tell "the tale of the tribe." All three were deeply disillusioned with what Pound called "a botched civilization," radically distrusted the idea of progress, and embraced various cyclical theories of time.

Craig's final chapter suggests the particular appeal of Fascism to writers intent on creating a poetry that was both revolutionary in its stylistic import and deeply conservative in its attempt to recover and restore the mythical world of the past. From their elite and anti-democratic perspective, Fascism seemed to be striving to be modern in a parallel way, combining a mythology of the machine age (symbolized by the airplane) with a mythology of the agrarian past (symbolized by the plough). The mistake for Yeats, Eliot, and Pound was to associate memory with a specific social class; this led them to the idea that the values of memory could be built into a hierarchical structure of society. Fascism seemed to offer the political means to insure continuity, thus "recreating a people with a memory."

The quirkiest and most problematic aspect of Craig's book is his argument that the modernist poets were working within a central British Associationist tradition. He resurrects and centers Hartley's 18th century philosophy (refuted by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria*) in order to argue that the modernists had an "empiricist and psychologistic theory of poetry" which always privileged "the might of memory" over "the power of imagination." Craig also uses an updated Associationist notion of the mind to account for the reader's aesthetic response to modernist poetry. Unfortunately, Craig's theory confuses the nature of a reader's associational responses with the philosophical doctrine of Associationism; at the same time, by locating the modernist philosophy of aesthetic response in the British empirical tradition he insulates modernism in a British context much too narrowly, denies the very real importance of French symbolism to the modernist project, and severs its connections with English romanticism. Craig's lively and revisionary argument is useful but ultimately unconvincing. The Associationist theory will simply not work for Yeats who believed that "the mechanical theory has no reality" and in one poem announced that "Man has created death." Yeats remained a strong anti-empiricist throughout his life, struggling against a "naturalism that leaves man helpless before the contents of his own mind," and always standing with Blake on the side of "the Real Man the Imagination which Liveth for Ever." Nor will it work for Pound whose "ideogramic" method and home-made political philosophy can still be understood as part of a transcendentalist tradition and thus identified as radically American both in temper and spirit. And finally Craig's empirical theory will not apply to Eliot whose philosophy was derived from Bradley's anti-empirical Idealism and whose modernist poetics were simultaneously classical and post-symbolist. (The "Four Quartets" continue to retain a symbolist inflection.) Yeats's romantic preoccupation with the epiphanic moment, Pound's Emersonian organicism and poetics of collage, and Eliot's heavy reliance on disembodied voices and symbolist effects all raise narrative problems—and questions of reader response—which an Associationist theory of writing and reading simply cannot account for.

What Craig also neglects is the fact that modernism was by its very nature a renaissance of the archaic, a radical movement forward that was simultaneously

a return to the deep past at the very beginning of civilization. Behind the modernist passion for the archaic there was, in Guy Davenport's words, "a longing for something lost, for energies, values, and certainties unwisely abandoned by an industrial age." This helps to account for Pound's ongoing preoccupation with the roots of English, Chinese and Greek poetry, Eliot's historical longing for an undivided sensibility, and Yeats's virtual obsession with Unity of Being. It should not be too difficult to see how this preoccupation with the archaic could be attached to a strongly conservative politics, though there was no ultimate necessity for conjoining them. It might also be said that the renaissance of the archaic—which included artists like Modigliani and Picasso and novelists like Lewis and Joyce as well as poets like Pound and Eliot—was not so much an act of associationist memory as an enormous leap of the creative imagination.

*Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry* raises crucial questions and makes a studious and important attempt to connect modernist poetry and politics. But in the end the question still remains why the language of modern poetry falls in, as if naturally, with the language of power.

EDWARD HIRSCH

Wayne State University

*The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* by Karen Lawrence. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. Pp. xi + 229. \$18.50.

It is delightful to have fresh evidence that Joyce criticism has turned a corner. That is, studies are no longer being devoted exclusively to stream of consciousness (a topic fostered by Joyce himself through Stuart Gilbert and Edward Dujardin and followed up by Melvin Friedman, Robert Humphrey, and Erwin Steinberg), to character, theme, influence or to symbolism but rather and increasingly to aspects of the narrative and stylistic development. Karen Lawrence's new study, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses*, is the latest of these. It follows in the traces of Hugh Kenner's recent work (and of my own) in subtle and distinct ways and should be read along with Roy Gottfried's *The Art of Joyce's Syntax in Ulysses*.

Gottfried argues for the underlying consistency of Joyce's styles, concentrating on the stylistic micro-surface as it relates to the book's meaning. By contrast, Lawrence sees the later styles, which she attempts to show growing out of the early method (as far back as *Dubliners*), as revealing a special dramatic movement that, though not completely autonomous, can be distinguished from the movement of plot and character. Hers is an often brilliant and original attempt to spotlight the qualities of chapters that have been contention's bones until very recently when they have become the favorites of advanced writers and critical thinkers. In short, she is continuing a tendency to focus on the obviously manipulated or "arranged"<sup>1</sup> aspects of certain key chapters ("Aeolus," "Wandering

<sup>1</sup> The term "arranger" is mine. It is dismissed as inadequate on Lawrence's page 64 though in my opinion much of the argument of her book hangs on my discussion in *Ulysses: The Mechanics of Meaning* (1970) and Hugh Kenner's further application of it in *Joyce's Voices* (1978). See also Kenner's recent and

Rocks" through "Ithaca") in reaction to earlier tendencies. This has necessarily resulted in a self-limiting approach, one which, by neglecting the less emphatically mediated styles, tends to falsify in a variety of important ways the larger impact of the radical style changes.

There is a contradiction implicit in this study, which purports to trace Joyce's tactics back to the use of the *style indirect libre* in *Dubliners*. Joyce did indeed push the Flaubertian *style indirect libre* (free indirect discourse) quite far in those stories (much further than Lawrence indicates) and in his later work. He may even, as she suggests, have pushed some of his voices to the point of parody. But such procedures cannot satisfactorily explain or justify the parodic (and pastiche) impulse so evident in the later chapters of *Ulysses*. In fact, no single causal sequence fully explains any of his decisions. Furthermore, all sorts of steps are left out of this argument when we fail to include in the treatment the innovations of *Portrait* and the early chapters of *Ulysses*.

The style changes effectively began with the frequently noted shifts that mark the chapters of *Portrait*. The parodic or adaptive styles found by Lawrence in the late chapters of *Ulysses* are prefigured by the three insets which mark breaks in the overarching technique of that novel: the Dickensian/Ibsenian Christmas dinner of Chapter 1, the sermons of Chapter 3, and the diary which concludes that text. Though they may not immediately be recognized as such, each of those passages represents a return to an established literary genre rendered anachronistic by Joyce's practice in the body of *Portrait*. The dramatic impact of such passages is of course stronger than is the stylistic shock, but there can be no question that the understated approach foreshadowed later choices.

Lawrence agrees that *Ulysses* has an overarching "initial" narrative voice, one that inspires confidence in the narrative's reliability during the first half of *Ulysses*. She does a fine job extending and supporting that position, but what interests her most is the disappearance of that verbal presence after "Sirens." As a result, she scants the complexity of the textual dialectic that precedes the introduction of obviously manipulated discourse in the headlines of "Eolus," failing to see to what degree *Ulysses* is, from the perspective of its stylistic strategies a yin/yang structure in which the dark nocturnal underside secretly, gradually and pervasively subverts the day just as the diurnal vision pervades the nighttime chapters. This leads to a fundamental misconception of the book, though it does not significantly dull the brilliance of her readings of certain individual chapters to which she brings a fresh perspective and genuine receptivity.

Her approach tends to reverse the critical error of S. L. Goldberg, who rejects the innovative chapters because they depart from the realist norms and seem self-indulgent. Edging toward the French positions, she sees "self-indulgence" (which she labels differently) as a sign of power. Both seem to quarrel with the essential and intricate unity of the text, though only Lawrence claims to have a direct line to authorial intention.

What saves this bumptious book, and saved it is, is Lawrence's decision to focus her attention on the formal implications of chapters which, though their styles

---

remarkable *Ulysses* (1980). She offers several substitute terms but seems finally to settle on the "consciousness or mind of the text" (p. 183) a locution which, though awkward, is a rough approximation of "arranger."



have already, and inevitably, received attention, cry out for fuller and more innovative readings. Or rather which demand that we pay attention to the specifics of the violence they do to accept forms. By isolating formal difference, Lawrence has been able to say something fresh about operative aspects that have remained peripheral to other treatments of Joyce's styles.

Specifically, I appreciate her handling of the "Aeolus" headlines, the rhetorical asides in "Cyclops," the styles of "Oxen of the Sun" (which do far more than simply mime the development of English prose), the cliché-riddled rhetoric of "Eumeus," and the dry-as-dust catalogues that simultaneously dehumanize and vitalize the action of "Ithaca." If, as it happens, her approach leads her to devalue and even deform the accomplishments of other styles and textual moments (e.g., "Scylla and Charybdis" which she underreads and "Nausicaa" and "Penelope" which she virtually condemns), so be it, *caveat lector*.

The book's strengths and weaknesses can be traced, in part, to its evolving theory that "the book is about writing and reading fiction as well as the characters in Dublin" and that there is a "story of the writing of a novel" which comes to a fitting non-conclusion in "Ithaca." There is some truth in the view that Joyce's novels are heading in this direction, that he is devising texts that draw their power from their own powerful inner drives. *Finnegans Wake*, with its focus on the "letter" of ALP as the generative and ultimate "word," the source and end of human experience, seems to reinforce this sort of reading of the second half of *Ulysses*. But *Ulysses* is far more than its second half.

Inevitably, the strengths of Lawrence's approach derived directly from her need strongly, polemically to defend her argument for a complex and self-reflexive textual development. In her discussion of "Eolus," we learn from her scrutiny of the details of the headlines, the disclosure of their parodic mechanisms which leads her towards and away from a consideration of the remainder of the chapter. Though her reading of "Wandering Rocks" is spotty, she is correct in saying that the "text includes the possibilities of writing usually 'ousted' by a particular linear movement of plot" (88). "Sirens" gets a stronger reading, emphasizing among other things the way the language-distortions grow out of a failure-to-hear on the public level but failing to note how the "music" is a function of the interlocking variations on a theme: a self-mocking procedure, but a procedure nonetheless. It is indeed as though "drunken clowning were enacted by the language itself." In "Cyclops" she gives a strong reading of the parodic asides, but that focus inevitably distorts the chapter and fails to locate the textual rationale, reducing the "philosophical implications" of the styles on the one hand to a statement about "Joyce's skepticism about any mode of writing" and on the other to a demonstration of "the problem of the modern writer." Her account of the Rabelaisian attributes of the chapter, of its mode ("slapstick"), and of Joyce's role reveal an inadequate understanding of the fine points of the decorum.

The opening of "Nausicaa" is a barely acceptable stylistic lapse for this critic, who imposes a stylistic theme and then faults Joyce for not adhering to it: "the trouble with this section" is that, by returning to a linear development, "it suggests an idea about language that the text has already rejected" (122). There are surely other ways to read Joyce's deliberate choice to undermine his own procedures. We may among other things see in it the return to procedures in *Portrait* just as Bloom's monologue reaffirms the prefigurations we note in the early chapters.

Surely, one of the most easily misread or rather over- and underread chapters, since it encourages cataloguing at the expense of analysis, "Oxen of the Sun" lends itself to Lawrence's method better than any of the preceding chapters. After all, it features unmitigated stylistic innovation, making varied use of pastiche and parody to advance as well as enhance and retard the narrative. Though the chapter raises some questions about her argument, this is a fine performance for which we should be grateful. She is right to call "Oxen" Stephen's "Cyclops." Indeed, it should be associated not only with "Scylla and Charybdis" but also with "Proteus," both of which release their intellectual and psychological burden reluctantly but with astounding vigor under inspection.

Lawrence's long chapter on "Circe," sandwiched between her best passages of interpretation, is a mixed performance. We have read a good deal of this before and may wonder at the failure to treat the farcial component, at the facile handling of the form, and at the virtual omission of Stephen's role in the action, which is surely distinct from if not opposed to Bloom's role. But "Circe" is far too big a chapter for this approach.

The same is not true of "Eumeus," though Lawrence does scant justice to the humor, too glibly sees its style as a "travesty of the initial style," and misses the fact that the clichéd language works inadequately to conceal the motives and behavior of Stephen and Bloom, providing a porous screen of verbal gestures. We may also wonder why she so insistently puts herself in the mind of the author ("Joyce seems to be saying," "Joyce asserts his own consciousness over," "Joyce felt the worst thing," etc.)? Why does so much of the treatment of "stupidity" read like secondhand Jonathan Culler? Still we may indeed see the "destruction of literature" in "Eumeus" as the text's (not Joyce's) "deliberate refusal of" the "mantle" of "Literature" in the grand tradition. Most of her points are well taken and the result is a genuine contribution, as is her long chapter on "Ithaca." The latter is thoroughly engrossing and generally convincing in its details, the best treatment of the catechistic technique to date and a masterful argument for what has become one of the book's most influential chapters thanks to, as well as in spite of, the obstacles it puts in the way of reader "satisfaction."

Briefly, then, this is a study that will have to be contended with even though it falls short of perfection. There is, to my mind, no better treatment of the most eccentric styles and there are relatively few Joyce books that are so economical in their presentation or crisp in their articulation.

DAVID HAYMAN

*University of Wisconsin, Madison*

*Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams, and Faulkner* by Carolyn Porter. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981. Pp. xxiv + 339. \$22.50.

Since Quentin Anderson's imperial claims in *The Imperial Self* that nineteenth-century American literature is largely oral, infantile, and egomaniacal in a protoplasmic manner, there has been in the intervening ten years very little effort to

rehistoricize the figures against whom Anderson aimed his critical ammunition. Emerson, Whitman, and James (among others) are now commonly taken to be the social tyrants Anderson accused them of being. Anderson's project, however, can be seen as part of a larger historical project of American criticism to withdraw its literary texts from social history, in order to make them safe for what might be called homegrown Symbolism, the usual elsewhere world with which every student of American studies is terribly familiar. Carolyn Porter's intricately intelligent and contentious book, which should be something of a landmark in this terrain, returns these writers to the material culture that in fact gave rise to them. Using the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*, among others, Porter argues that the process of reification in nineteenth-century American culture effectively hypostatizes the observer so that he is exalted, immobilized, and neutralized; in this, his experience serves as an analogue to the experience of other workers in different fields. The argument presupposes that writers such as Emerson understood the nature of the coming capitalist expansion and made an effort to resist it, an effort that is ultimately effected by the Faulkner of *Absalom, Absalom!* That is, Faulkner's strategies implicate the reader in such a way as to give him an unhappy consciousness of his presumed neutrality, neutrality that he cannot hold in good faith if he has understood at all the implications of the story he has just read. The text destabilizes the reader's position, so that the very stance of detachment is finally seen to be a hazardous political one.

Porter's departure from the official, and thus idealized, versions of American literary history gives her a way of discussing Emerson that does not either canonize him as a sectarian saint or humiliate his thinking by arguing that it is absurdly vacuous or impotent. The grounds of the discussion are set with a brilliantly outlined summary of American economic history of the period; this is followed by a painstaking logical analysis of *Nature*, of its efforts to engage its historical condition by dissolving "'solid-seeming' reified objectivity." Porter's discussion of the failure of the argument to stick to this particular resolve, and her explanation for this failure, are incisive and unsentimental, and they do that most difficult of all critical tasks: they make Emerson's failure crucially important, the product of a tremendous intellectual struggle with a particular kind of cultural change.

There is no such struggle in James; instead, the world of *The Golden Bowl* is one that is rigidly commodified, and to struggle against it is simply to ignore the truth of the matter, which is that everyone has his value and his price. Everyone goes shopping; everyone picks out the highest object of value he can afford. The celebrated aesthetic dimension to this novel is actually a kind of lacquer, like the painting over the bowl. The particular perils of seeing, and the individual's fate as a prized commodity that must do nothing but see and still master the situation, are laid out in an oddly passionate way, producing the most remarkable "reading" of all the chapters in the book. Porter's following chapters on the distressed irony of *The Education of Henry Adams*, and the readerly slippage of *Absalom, Absalom!* are notable for their historical precision and sensitivity to tone.

Having made large claims for this book in a short space, I want to conclude by drawing attention to the missing subject that has not, in a sense, been re-materialized, rehistoricized. In reading through the material on Emerson and then

subsequent figures, one becomes uneasily aware that if the process of rematerialization is to succeed, then the body must become part of that discussion. Peculiar as it is, Anderson's discussion assumes that the body has a sexual dimension and that the way in which one considers one's body *as material* has something to do with the way one also views the world. It is true that the body can become just another commodity, but history also has some effect on the ferocity of the mind-body split. Observing is part of capitalism, but it is also part of a historically generated passive-aggressive sexual stance, and when Porter discusses the transparent eyeball, she notes that "this airborne bubble endowed with sight results from a beheading." But if Emerson manages to make the body disappear, where does it go? Unfortunately, this question pulls us back into the time-worn question of American idealism and its relation to Puritanism, but there is no reason why Emerson's failure can't also be ascribed to his failure to make sexuality a mode of encountering the world. If sexuality is a mode of engaging a world—a mode that capitalism typically hopes to domesticate—it would seem that a capitalist take-off period and sexual sublimation go hand-in-hand. If this is a complaint against the book Porter *didn't* write, so be it. The one she did write is extraordinarily good.

CHARLES BAXTER

Wayne State University