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Book Reviews

A POETICS OF RENAISSANCE CULTURE

Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare by Stephen Green-
blatt. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Pp. x + 321.
$20.00.

I

The title of Stephen Greenblatt's brilliant new book will recall to readers his
admirable study of Sir Walter Relegh, subtitled "The Renaissance Man
and His Roles." [1] In an Epilogue to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt
suggests that he originally conceived the new book along the lines of the
earlier one:

> I intended to explore the ways in which major English writers of the
> sixteenth century created their own performances . . . to understand
> the role of human autonomy in the construction of identity. . . . But as
> my work progressed, I perceived that fashioning oneself and being
> fashioned by cultural institutions—family, religion, state—were inseparably
> intertwined. . . . Whenever I focused sharply upon a moment of appar-
> ently autonomous self-fashioning, I found not an epiphany of identity
> freely chosen but a cultural artifact. If there remained any traces of
> free choice, the choice was among possibilities whose range was strictly
> delineated by the social and ideological system in force. (256)

The book Greenblatt had intended to write would have been a good one; the
book he has actually written is undoubtedly better.

Discarding naive and nostalgic notions of the Renaissance, Greenblatt formu-
lates a paradigm of sixteenth-century self-fashioning that is fit for an iron age:

> We may say that self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between
> an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter par-
> takes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack,
> and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the
> signs of its own subversion or loss. (9)
>
> * * *
>
> Self-fashioning . . . requires both an enabling institution, a source of power
> and communal values . . . and a perception of the not-self, of all that lies
> outside, or resists, or threatens identity. (177)

All relationships in sixteenth-century society are relationships of differential
power. And in the cultural logic of the Renaissance, the nature of such power

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[1] Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Ralegh: The Renaissance Man and His
Roles* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1973).

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is epitomized in a complementary relationship between the glorified body of the prince and the tortured body of the deviant. Thus it is a darker vision of the Renaissance—one influenced by Freud and Foucault, as well as by much recent historical research—that emerges from this work: a vision of repression and "regenerative violence," of xenophobia and exploitation, of subversion and persecution. By refusing simply to reaffirm the critical and ethical pieties entrenched in Tudor literary studies, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* challenges our understanding of Renaissance culture. It thereby enlarges our understanding of our own culture, which has constituted "The Renaissance" in conformity with modern ideologies of personal and aesthetic autonomy.

The book consists of a theoretical introduction and six chapters, organized into Henrician and Elizabethan triads. Each chapter is centered upon a writer whose work is "the focal point for converging lines of force in sixteenth-century culture" (5): More, Tyndale, and Wyatt; Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare.[2] These chapters vary considerably in their scope: from a mono-graph on More's life and writings to a reading of *Othello*, from an analysis of early Protestant mentality, as revealed in polemical discourse and acts of martyrdom, to a delineation of the psycho-social paradigm variously embodied in Marlowe's dramatic heroes. The chapters on Wyatt and Spenser tell us much about the politics and cultural styles of the Henrician and Elizabethan courts. But whereas the range of Wyatt's poetry is discussed in some detail, consideration of Spenser's great poetic corpus is largely confined to a single canto (II. xii) of *The Faerie Queene*. From this initial description, the book might seem to be merely an eccentric mélange. In fact, it is a powerful and coherent work of criticism, an exemplary contribution to what Greenblatt him-self calls "a poetics of culture." A review cannot do justice to the interpretive riches of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. I shall merely summarize the central points of the individual chapters—raising questions about some of them—and discuss the book's theoretical and methodological import for Renaissance studies.

II

Greenblatt describes the subject of his first and longest chapter as "the complex interplay in More's life and writings of self-fashioning and self-cancellation, the shaping of a public role and the profound desire to escape from the identity so crafted" (12-13). More's "life strategy" was the attempt to maintain, under enormous pressure, "a calculated distance between the public *persona* and the inner self" (68). The debate between Morus and Hyth-lodaeus that opens *Utopia* projects a dialectic between More's public self and the private consciousness that was alienated from his own compromises and complicities. In a stimulating analysis of Utopian social and family organi-zation, Greenblatt suggests that "private ownership of property is causally linked in *Utopia* to private ownership of self"; "to abolish private property is to render such self-conscious individuality obsolete" (38-39). Thus Utopian

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[2] Four previously published essays—on More, Marlowe (2), and Shakespeare—are here incorporated in revised form.

communism fictively resolves More's felt need to negate his own inwardness. Greenblatt conceives of *Utopia* as a complex symbolization of More's ambivalent psyche; it "functions as a playground in which a shifting series of apparently incompatible impulses can find intense expression without flying apart or turning violently on each other" (57). When the historical moment which made this tenuous ludic equilibrium possible had passed—when "the *consensus fidelium*" (63) was threatened by radical reform—then the elements of More's consciousness fused successfully in *Utopia* began to break apart. Greenblatt traces this process in More's subsequent life and in his polemical writings.

The second chapter explores further the psycho-social crises of the Reformation. That genuinely revolutionary moment is the scene for the acts and monuments of early Protestant self-fashioning. Greenblatt sees More and Tyndale as mighty opposites pursuing antithetical means to a similar end: "Both achieve guaranteed access to a truth that lies beyond individual or social construction, beyond doubt or rebellion"—More, through the mediations of the Catholic Church; Tyndale, through those of "a sacred text illuminated by faith" (111). The new mode of interiority being formed in the early sixteenth century was inseparable from a new mode of communication: the vernacular printed book.

Wyatt, the third author in Greenblatt's Henrician triad, is unlike More in that he "has no supreme consensus, set apart from royal power and made visible in an enduring institution"; and unlike Tyndale in that he "does not give himself over entirely to the Word: theological self-fashioning—the power of the book over identity—cannot be long separated from secular self-fashioning—the power of sexual and political struggles at court" (116). Wyatt's spiritual, diplomatic and amorous experiences are shown to be interwined in the life of his poetry. Greenblatt's Wyatt is no romantic rebel but a Tudor courtier whose fashioning of self and poems is constituted by the conventions of domination and submission which pervade his society. Wyatt's poetry, then, is "a species of conduct" designed for survival and advancement in a predatory environment. The psalms, satires, and lyrics are various "functional registers of his relation to the world" (135). By this, Greenblatt does not mean to imply that Wyatt's poetry is a mere "reflection" of the ideology which produced it. He invokes the Marxist aesthetic theory of "internal distantiation"— Louis Althusser's strategy for redeeming art from its banishment to the super-structure—so as to maintain that "a gap beween discourse and intention opens up in Wyatt." This "gap" makes it possible "for his greatest poems to engage in complex reflections upon the system of values that has generated them" (156). In such lyrics, Greenblatt senses a "*suspension ...* between impositions of the self on the world and critical exploration of inwardness" (156). I find the readings of Wyatt's texts compelling. But I wonder exactly what Greenblatt means when he calls their condition of "continual conflict" and "suspension" a *dialectical achievement* and attributes the achievement to Wyatt himself (156). Greenblatt's use of Althusserian notions sometimes fails to keep the ideological operations in the text and the consciousness of the poet theoretically distinct.[3]

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[3] The vexed relationship between ideology and literary production is discussed

Greenblatt states the interpretive problem of *The Faerie Queene*, Book Two, canto twelve, as "why the particular erotic appeal of the Bower...excites the hero's destructive violence" (171). Grounded more in Freudian metapsychology than in Aristotelian ethics, his reading of the text departs radically from the current orthodoxies of Spenser criticism. For him, "the Bower of Bliss must be destroyed not because its gratifications are unreal but because they threaten 'civility'—civilization—which for Spenser is achieved only through renunciation and the constant exercise of power" (173). Thus the destruction of the Bower of Bliss is an exemplum of civilization's discontents, an epitome of the conflict between intense desire and anxious repression that Greenblatt sees as characteristic of the whole poem. He acknowledges that the episode is "embedded in a narrative that is shaped throughout by the Poet's complex moral intelligence" (171) but he does not produce a reading of the preceding eleven cantos of the book. He is concerned with the fashioning of the fictional hero's self—and, by analogy, the selves of the author and the reader—rather than with the sustained fashioning of the text. Seizing upon Freud's homology between sexual repression and social oppression, Greenblatt elaborates three "reiterations by the culture of important elements of the destruction of the Bower of Bliss: the European response to the native cultures of the New World, the English colonial struggle in Ireland, and the Reformation attack on images" (179). This procedure is a brilliant tour-de-force which succeeds in illuminating the cultural pattern embedded in Spenser's text. Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* and his participation in the systematic destruction of Hiberno-Norman civilization are related to The Bower of Bliss and *The Faerie Queene* in a new, disturbing, and (for this reader) convincing way.

On the other hand, I remain unconvinced by the final conclusion that

> Spenser's art does not lead us to perceive ideology critically, but rather affirms the existence and inescapable moral power of ideology as that principle of truth toward which art forever yearns. It is art whose status is questioned in Spenser, not ideology; indeed, art is questioned precisely to spare ideology that internal distantiation it undergoes in the work of Shakespeare or Marlowe. (192)

This seriously underestimates the complexity and ambivalence of Spenser's poetic discourse. Spenser's poetry repeatedly puts into question the "truth" claims of the courtly ideology and courtly aesthetics it ostensibly embodies. Greenblatt's own sense that the whole poem is characterized by "an intense craving for release" (173) from the ideology it promotes and by moments of "disillusionment" (179) would seem to undermine his own categorical conclusion. I would argue that there are throughout Spenser's poetry moments

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in a stimulating (if tentative and stylistically uningratiating) way in Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: New Left Books, 1976). Eagleton maintains that "there is...a peculiar 'ideology of the text', reducible to neither 'general' nor 'authorial' ideologies, which in any two texts would be the same only if those texts were verbally identical" (p. 99). Eagleton criticizes Althusser's concept of "internal distantiation" on pp. 82ff.

of precisely that "internal distance" which allow us to perceive critically the ideology in which the poem is held. Nevertheless, whatever objections one may raise against it—and these are likely to vary with the critical persuasions and vested interests of particular critics—this chapter of Greenblatt's book is certainly one of the most stimulating and significant pieces of Spenser criticism to have appeared in recent years.

Greenblatt sees in Marlovian drama a varied but sustained expression of "a radically intensified sense that time is abstract, uniform, and inhuman" (199). Typically, Marlovian heroes impose their own forms on inchoate experience by committing acts of violence against others and against themselves. The Marlovian paradigm for self-fashioning is the repetition compulsion of his heroes' acts: "Identity is a theatrical invention that must be reiterated if it is to endure" (201). In the work of More, Tyndale, Wyatt, and Spenser, identity is achieved through an attack on the alien; "in Marlowe it is achieved through a subversive identification with the alien" (203). The ambiguity in Greenblatt's illuminating argument lies in the nature of the relationship between Marlowe and his heroes: in what sense do his heroes' fictional acts of self-fashioning articulate Marlowe's own self-fashioning? As Greenblatt points out, Marlowe's heroes do not so much depart from as invert the paradigms of Elizabethan orthodoxy. The attempts of Tamburlaine, Barabas, Edward, and Faustus to challenge this system "are subjected to relentless probing and exposed as unwitting tributes to that social construction of identity against which they struggle" (209). The implication is that Marlowe, having eluded the hegemony of his culture, conducts this investigation and exposure of his characters' entrapment within it. Here Greenblatt suggests a radically ironic relationship between the dramatist and his characters; but elsewhere he admits a considerable degree of identification: "In his turbulent life and, more important, in his writing, Marlowe is deeply implicated in his heroes, though he is far more intelligent and self-aware than any of them" (220). I am less convinced than Greenblatt seems to be that Marlowe's plays demonstrate his absolute artistic control, self-awareness, and philosophical detachment.[4] Are the relentless probings and exposures of his heroes' attempts at subversion the work of Marlowe's consciousness? Or are they the textual embodiments of those ironies and contradictions in Marlowe's historical situation which are accessible only to the perceptive modern reader?

The final chapter opens with a subtle explication of "the improvisation of power." For Greenblatt, improvisation is "the ability both to capitalize on the unforseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario" (227). Such improvisation is made possible by "the subversive perception of another's truth as an ideological construct" (228), yet one which resembles the belief system of the improvisator. A felicitous example of this concept in action is the appropriation of Catholic and particularly Marian symbolism by the Elizabethan

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[4] For example: "Marlowe stands apart then from both orthodoxy and skepticism; he calls into question the theory of literature and history as repeatable moral lessons, and he calls into question his age's characteristic mode of rejecting those lessons" (212).

regime. But Greenblatt's central text is *Othello*; and his focus is upon Othello's undoing by Iago's improvisation. Iago plays upon Christian doctrines that censured intense sexual pleasure within marriage as a kind of adultery; he does so precisely because Othello's self is divided between desire for and fear of such pleasure. The mechanism which impels Guyon to ravage Acrasia's Bower is that which impels Othello to "purify" Desdemona by violence: "He must destroy Desdemona both for her excessive experience of pleasure and for awakening such sensations in himself" (250). This chapter provides a stimulating rhetorical and socio-cultural context for a psychoanalytic reading of the tragedy.

Greenblatt sees his triad of Henrician writers as collectively enacting "a momentous ideological shift in early modern England from the *consensus fidelium* embodied in the universal Catholic Church to the absolutist claim of the Book and the King" (157). Such cohesiveness is less apparent in his Elizabethan triad. Here he concentrates more on texts than on the direct connections between a text and the life of its author. A wider range of texts and topics is discussed in each chapter; at the same time, the royal presence wanes. The pervasive force of Henry's personality and policies contributes to the unity of the first three studies. In the Elizabethan half of the book, Elizabeth and her regime seem central only to Spenser's work. Indeed, *Othello* is very much a Jacobean play, not only in terms of chronology but in terms of style. Greenblatt does not explore the significance of such differences. An analysis of the *apparent* absence of the royal Other from the texts of Marlowe and Shakespeare might have illuminated some of the book's major concerns.

The "higher levels of conscious artistry" in later sixteenth-century writing are said to create "more complex and seemingly autonomous characters in fully realized fictional worlds" (161). This is an unexceptionable description of the rapid transformation of the *drama*; and it is to this multi-media art form and its distinctive socio-economic matrix that many of Greenblatt's generalizations about the literature of the later sixteenth century best apply:

> It becomes increasingly possible for at least a small number of men to conceive of literature as their primary activity: as we pass from Spenser to Marlowe and Shakespeare, we move toward a heightened investment of professional identity in artistic creation. Consequently, it becomes easier to discuss the formation and undermining of identity *within* individual works without formally referring beyond them to the lives of their creators. (161)[5]

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[5] One could argue that Shakespeare—playwright, actor, and entrepreneur— must have conceived of the *theater* as his primary activity; and that, of the three writers, Spenser is most likely to have conceived of *literature* (in the sixteenth century, a category socially distinct from and superior to drama) as his primary activity. Spenser might be thought of as founding a line of English poets who invest their professional identity in artistic creation. Shakespearean *drama* is an art almost anonymous, in which the authorial self is disseminated into the text and into its performance; Spenserian *poetry*, however, is the very medium of laureate self-fashioning. See Richard Helgerson, "The Elizabethan Laureate: Self-Presentation and the Literary System," *ELH*, 46 (1979), 193-220.

The change of focus from the fashioning of persons to the fashioning of characters is perhaps too easily accomplished. If the book has a theoretical and methodological shortcoming, it consists in Greenblatt's reluctance to problem-atize his central terms: *fashioning* and *self-fashioning*. Although it may sometimes be difficult or impossible in practice, in theory we should distinguish and interrelate four processes: an author's self-fashioning *in action*; an author's self-fashioning *in writing*; an author's fashioning of a *character* (whether it be a lyric persona or a narrative character; the hero of a drama or merely an attendant lord); and the author's fashioning of the *text* itself, within which " character "—and every particular character—is constituted as a textual effect.[6]

III

Although Greenblatt's thinking is explicitly indebted to Freud, he is unconcerned to commit himself to one among the several current paths of clinical and literary psychoanalytic theory. He justly characterizes his study of Renaissance self-fashioning as " cultural or anthropological criticism " (4). Thus, the strongest psychoanalytic affinities of his work are with recent studies empha-sizing the historical and cultural specificity of psychological phenomena: with Arthur F. Marotti's welcome insistence that " a socio-cultural system not only inculcates certain ideals, values, sublimations—that is, superego and ego for-mations—but also ... the very shapes of ('instinctive') desire and need " ; and with William Kerrigan's exemplary demonstration that " our anatomy of Renais-sance creativity must ... explore the shared symbolic context within which the ego spoke." [7]

Greenblatt describes his chosen authors as " individuals who reward intense attention and give access to larger patterns " (6); and in some chapters the emphasis is upon the individual, in others, upon the larger pattern. His subject is the cultural and *culture-specific* construction or (to use the apposite Elizabethan term) the *fashioning* of identity in both literary characters and historical persons. Such fashioning is performed—and is only accessible to us—in texts, texts of every kind: not only poems, plays and narrative fictions but also polemical tracts and travel accounts, letters and diaries, official proclamations and diplomatic dispatches, paintings and pageants. Thus Greenblatt's method implies that the notion which privileges " literature " as an autonomous discourse belongs to a post-Renaissance aesthetic ideology. The distinction between poetic language and ordinary language is illusory: " There is no sharp break between literature

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[6] Dramatic texts imply a further process, one that is of great interest but difficult to analyze historically: the actor's fashioning of a dramatic role and his self-fashioning through such professional role-playing. For some speculations, see Louis Adrian Montrose, " The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology," *Helios*, N.S., 7 (1980), 51-74.

[7] Arthur F. Marotti, " Countertransference, the Communication Process, and the Dimensions of Psychoanalytic Criticism," *Critical Inquiry*, 4 (1978), 486; William Kerrigan, " The Articulation of the Ego in the English Renaissance," in *The Literary Freud: Mechanisms of Defense and the Poetic Will*, ed. Joseph H. Smith, M.D. (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), p. 290.

and social life." Furthermore, there is no sharp break between the ontogeny of poems and the ontogeny of persons: "humans [are] cultural artifacts" (3).

Thus a "poetics of culture" envisions the "self" as a unique incarnation of cultural coding. And Greenblatt envisions literature as having three interlocking "functions" within the cultural process by which selves are fashioned: "Literature functions . . . as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes" (4). Each of these functions may be the subject of a critical practice which reduces the text to an epiphenomenon—a reflection of authorial biography, of material infrastructure, or of ideal forms, respectively. Greenblatt's own practice attempts to address all of these functions. Thus, cultural poetics is a kind of "balancing act" (5). (This is a revealing phrase, for in Greenblatt's work one is frequently reminded that writing criticism is an intellectual and rhetorical *performance*, and that reading criticism can be exhilarating experience.)

As this review has begun to suggest, "culture" is one of the cardinal terms in Greenblatt's study. For his definition of culture and the theoretical orientation of his work, he acknowledges a debt to *The Interpretation of Cultures*, by anthropologist Clifford Geertz.[8] For Geertz and Greenblatt, culture is primarily the medium of sign production, of semiosis; it is the system of codes which "govern" the production of social life and the production of these ensembles of conventions and artifacts to which the term "culture" is often loosely applied. This is a version of what anthropologist Marshall Sahlins calls "the symbolic or meaningful" concept of culture, in which "human action in the world is to be understood as mediated by the cultural design, which gives order at once to practical experience, customary practice, and the relationship between the two."[9] What Geertz's work offers to literary critics and social historians is not a powerful *theory* of culture (Sahlins's work has greater theoretical power) but rather an exemplary *method* for describing "culture" in action, an ethnographic practice of great subtlety and richness. This "thick description" (as Geertz calls it) seizes upon an event or institution—an informant's narrative about sheep-stealing in Morocco; the ethnographer's observation of cockfights in Bali—and interrogates it in such a way as to reveal through the analysis of minute particulars the dynamics of a whole society, the lineaments of a culture.

To say that Greenblatt's practice of "thick description" is *brilliant* is both to judge its content and to describe its style. In his introduction, Greenblatt reassures us that literary texts are "the central object" of his attention. They are so because "great art is an extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of culture" (5), and because his own inclinations and training fit him for the interpretation of literature. It seems to me, however,

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[8] *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). This anthropological text seems to be congenial to increasing numbers of historians and literary critics.

[9] *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. viii, 55. Some would so enlarge the meaning of "ideology" as to make it coterminous with this sense of "culture."

that the excitement and importance of Greenblatt's work derive less from his readings of particular literary texts than from his powers of intertextual analysis: he has a remarkable ability to insert a highly wrought verbal artifact that has secured a major place in the literary canon into a context of contemporaneous events, objects, and (uncanonical) texts, in such a way that a mutual illumination occurs and a cultural paradigm is revealed.

Typically, Greenblatt begins with an "unliterary" bit of sixteenth century culture: for example, the events leading to the martyrdom of one John Bainham, a lapsed heretic examined by Lord Chancellor Thomas More; or an incident involving Spanish beguilement and enslavement of a Bahamian tribe, as recounted by Peter Martyr. Analysis of such events and texts reveals principles which are then shown to be operative in acts of literary self-fashioning by the major authors upon whose work the chapters are focused. Thus, the first example strikingly exemplifies the centrality of the printed vernacular Bible to the life of the early Protestant community; and Bainham's self-fashioning literally embodies the antithetical relationship between More and Tyndale. The second example is used to formulate the concept of improvisatory power which characterizes the perverted genius of Iago; and to point to the aura of exotic, barbaric otherness which divides Othello from the Venetians and divides him against himself. It should be noted that Greenblatt makes extensive and highly effective use of the sixteenth-century literature of exploration and colonization throughout *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. Indeed, one of the genuine achievements of Greenblatt's cultural poetics is to analyze the extraordinary phenomenon of Renaissance travel and conquest with unprecedented sophistication; and to reveal its profound (and profoundly *un*glamorous) relevance to larger patterns in Elizabethan culture.[10] Thus I must question Greenblatt's own affirmation that the analysis of "great art" (an unexamined category) belongs at the center of a "poetics of culture" (5). For, paradoxically, his own interpretive powers suggest that a cultural artifact that may not be classed as "great art" or as "art" at all may nevertheless be "an extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of culture." Certainly, the implication of Greenblatt's practice is that *all* texts—indeed, *all* cultural artifacts—demand and reward interpretation.

> In the Introduction to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt confesses that if cultural poetics is conscious of its status as interpretation, this consciousness must extend to an acceptance of the impossibility of fully

[10] Perhaps the most remarkable of these analyses—of ideological subversion in Thomas Harriot's *Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*—occurs in a recent essay which is, in some ways, an appendix to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and, in others, the commencement of a new phase in his work: Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversions," *Glyph: Johns Hopkins Textual Studies*, 9 (1981), 40-61. See also an earlier essay: Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century," in *First Images of America*, ed. Fredi Chiapelli, et al. 2 vols. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), II, 561-80.

> reconstructing and reentering the culture of the sixteenth century, of
> leaving behind one's own situation: it is everywhere evident in this book
> that the questions I ask of my material and indeed the very nature of this
> material are shaped by the questions I ask of myself. (5)

Every criticism of Renaissance literature is practiced under the same con-
straints. What distinguishes Greenblatt's "cultural poetics" is that it recognizes,
acknowledges, and integrates those constraints within its discourse.

The important methodological implication of Greenblatt's practice has been
forcefully articulated by Michael McCanles in a recent anatomy of historicist
Renaissance criticism: "Instead of viewing the scholar's enterprise as merely the
recovery and explanation of an already constituted Renaissance text, Renaissance
studies should recognize that its central task lies in the constitution of that text
through an intertextuality whereby two texts are brought together and fused:
the constituted discourse of the Renaissance and the constitutive discourse of the
scholar himself." [11] Greenblatt does indeed recognize this task. In a brief Epi-
logue, he tells the story of an abortive encounter between himself and a fellow
airplane passenger, which interrupted his re-reading of *The Interpretation of
Cultures*. In his final sentence, Greenblatt explains the purpose of this personal
travel narrative: "I want to bear witness at the close to my overwhelming need
to sustain the illusion that I am the principal maker of my own identity" (257).
At its consummation, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* suggests that, for the critic,
the process of understanding his subject is inseparable from the processes of
writing his text and fashioning his self.

If the study of sixteenth-century English culture is a kind of ethnography,
then the practitioner of cultural poetics is a kind of anthropological fieldworker.
The nature of ethnographic practice has been provocatively described by Roy
Wagner in a recent work of anthropological theory. Wagner extends McCanles'
point about the constitutive discourse of the critic when he claims that:

> an anthropologist "invents" the culture he believes himself to be study-
> ing.... In the act of inventing another culture, the anthropologist invents
> his own, and in fact he reinvents the notion of culture itself....
>   The relation an anthropologist builds between two cultures—which, in
> turn, objectifies and hence "creates" those cultures for him—arises
> precisely from his act of "invention," his use of meanings known to
> him in constructing an understandable representation of his subject
> matter....
>   The study of culture *is* culture.[12]

In the work of the human sciences, all acts of description are necessarily acts of
construction, performed by interpreters of culture who are themselves artifacts of
culture. It is in this sense that "a poetics of culture" is both a constituted and
a constitutive cultural practice; and that its practitioner is fashioned by what

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[11] "The Authentic Discourse of the Renaissance," *Diacritics*, 10, no. 1 (March
1980), 81.

[12] Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture*, rev. and expanded ed. (Chicago and
London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 4, 9, 16.

he fashions. Unlike many other areas of sixteenth-century studies, the criticism of Tudor literature and drama remains relatively unaffected by the increasing theoretical and methodological sophistication of the human sciences, and isolated from the challenges and possibilities of dialectical and interdisplinary modes of cultural analysis. Work like Stephen Greenblatt's promises to remedy these deficiencies. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* is a seminal contribution to our necessary reinvention of the English Renaissance.[13]

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Milton and the Martial Muse: Paradise Lost and the European Traditions of War by James A. Freeman. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980. Pp. xx + 253 + 27 pl. $17.50.

One of the principal functions of *Paradise Lost*, argues James Freeman in his *Milton and the Martial Muse*, is to reprove a generation that thought war gave scope for true nobility. Freeman takes for granted that Milton disapproved of war and that this disapproval is so clearly manifest in a work like *Paradise Lost* that a critic need only review rather than prove the case that the epic is one of the major anti-war works of the Renaissance. Freeman's aim, therefore, is to show how Milton has marshalled the very machinery of war against its ideological underpinnings, in order to convince his generation of its utter wickedness and essential baseness. The "machinery of war," here, is the military manuals of antiquity and the Renaissance, which praise the art of warfare and argue that it promotes reason, judgment, and virtue in human beings. Milton, Freeman argues, has closely studied these texts and made Satan and his angels such exemplary practitioners of the military arts that he exposes as devil's work the very practices that antiquity and the Renaissance so highly praised. Freeman's book focuses upon warfare as described by ancient and modern theoreticians, making little reference to actual battles. Readers who are interested in an analysis of the military arts in actual European warfare, or in the English Civil War, must look to other books. Freeman argues, in suport of his approach, that until the Civil War Englishmen like Milton had little direct experience with warfaring, and that even when the Civil War came, their attitudes remained largely those which had been shaped by the books on war read earlier.

The military textbooks, however, are not Freeman's only concern in this book. He considers also relevant Biblical passages on war and the commentaries on them, as well as sermons and, at greater length, those Latin and Greek epics that deal with warfare. Attempting, in the first of the four long sections of the book, to provide the reader with a broad general introduction, Freeman surveys the attitudes of society toward war from ancient times through the Renaissance,

ending with an account of Milton's own attitudes, both before and during the
Civil War period. In this section too, he surveys the major books of war
that will be referred to throughout, giving particular emphasis to the *De Re
Militari* of Flavius Vegetius Renatus (c. A.D. 400). Vegetius becomes for Free-
man a kind of "sample" war text, which he summarizes in order to epitomize
the war texts themselves. He approaches the survey of history in a similar way,
but with less precise results, attempting to epitomize the attitudes of different
societies with a few apt quotations. His design is to show that the Renaissance
inherited many of the pro-war stances of ancient society, even though as a
Christian society it theoretically condemned what in practice it fully supported.
It was so normal, he maintains, for Renaissance writers to characterize the
soldierly arts as those which promote discipline, manhood, and peace that such
praise must necessarily show those arts had general approval. Freeman attempts
to demonstrate that Milton, in disapproving them, was out of step with most
of the writers of his generation.

It is at this point that, I believe, his reasoning becomes less than fully con-
vincing. He argues that when Milton read the manuals of military arts in the
1630's and 40's, or tutored his nephews in these books, Milton was mastering that
which he detested. Further, he urges that Milton's consistent praising of the
arts of peace over those of war, and his arguing that citizens as well as soldiers
made contributions to society, are evidence of strong anti-war feeling. Yet
the praise of the arts of peace, hardly a sentiment to be found uniquely in
Milton, but one almost commonplace in the Renaissance, need not argue strong
anti-militarism. Furthermore, Milton elsewhere praises military leaders and
soldiers of the Commonwealth in terms that resemble those cited in Renaissance
pro-war exponents. Further, in both *Of Education* and in later prose tracts Milton
seems to recognize the necessity of military training and to appreciate the service
that a loyal army such as Cromwell mustered gave to a nation. The necessary con-
clusion would seem to be that neither is the Renaissance as a whole so solidly
pro-war nor John Milton the man so solidly anti-war as Freeman in this section
tends to urge.

Sections 2 and 3 of *Milton and the Martial Muse* turn to detailed exploration
of how the war books are used in *Paradise Lost*, and it is these sections, I
believe, that will be of most interest to readers. First, Freeman describes how
the rebel angels and Satan in category after category conform to the ex-
pectations that the war manuals had for good soldiers and the ideal general.
Whether in forming orderly ranks or in keeping careful watch or in practicing
military exercises, the rebel angels are almost textbook creatures, and their
leader is no less the perfect *dux belli*. Freeman has expanded upon the work of
earlier scholars like Hanford who first suggested Milton's debt to the military
manuals, and he demonstrates how precisely Milton has adopted their terminology
and descriptions in his account of the activities of the rebel angels in books 1, 2,
and 6 of *Paradise Lost*. It is useful to know that Satan's bearing a baton is a
mark of military office or that the term "limitary," used by Satan to describe
Gabriel, is a term for a soldier on garrison duty or that the phrase "to order
the spear" has the precise military denotation of to hold the spear upright, but
at rest. Further, to know that Milton took care to draw his description of

the ensign bearer Azazel from a military manual shows us that Milton was intent on making his angelic warriors look like their earthly counterparts. Freeman has included a generous number of illustrations to document many of these details, and so both in picture and in text has shown us the precision and depth of Milton's knowledge of things military

Given that the "Hellish" virtues are in many cases precisely the highest military virtues the Renaissance manuals praise, Freeman's assumption that Milton was thereby undercutting what his society thought most admirable seems logical enough. Yet there are problems in arguing that *Paradise Lost* is a direct attack upon the military arts. First of all, it is not the rebel angels alone who are military creatures, nor is Milton, as Freeman implies, boldly original in making Satan's angels soldiers, a role which they had been assigned since the late Middle Ages in a good number of poems that Milton undoubtedly knew. The loyal angels are also soldiers, and successful ones, and their leader Michael, as Freeman concedes, an almost perfect example of what the Renaissance expected of its military leaders. How then can Milton be said to approve of soldiership in the one and disapprove of it in the other? Freeman's response is cautious. He has chosen, in the central sections of the book, not to compare the military activities of the loyal and the rebel angels, even though he does state that the loyal angels were conventionally portrayed in Renaissance art as soldiers. He argues that it is the devils who are the "professional" soldiers, who engage in war because they choose to, not, like God's angels, because they must. Granting the general truth that Milton and his contemporaries thought that Satan was the "father of war," we still might expect a fuller consideration of those armies that fight a defensive war under the banners of the Lord of Hosts, particularly since defensive or just warfare is, as Freeman shows us, a subject treated in the military manuals.

Another problem is that the very war manuals that assist Milton in constructing portraits of Satan and his angels as exemplary soldiers are also drawn on, apparently, as Freeman shows us, for the critique of Satan's soldiership. The rebels do not in the final analysis live up to the classical ideal of soldiership that the war books foster, and the areas in which they fail are often exactly those in which the loyal angels succeed. Freeman spends considerable time exposing their failure. Sometimes, their activities, such as the construction work that Mammon and his angels undertake, betray a less than ideal soldiership. (Many military manuals disapprove, Freeman tells us, of soldiers being used as pioneers.) Other times, discipline fails them, as when they disband upon Satan's leaving for earth or become a serpentine rabble on his return. All too often, they are compared to the Barbarian hordes of the north and east and not the well-trained Greek and Roman warriors the Renaissance prized. Satan as leader lacks the personal integrity that many war books required in their general, for he places revenge above the public good, behaves rashly and selfishly, and practices fraud, which many, though not all, military experts condemned. (In a long section on force and fraud, Freeman points out that some of the military experts attempted to grant fraud under the name of strategy a kind of "damned" respectability.) The war texts provided then the standard by which both Satan's successes and his failures were judged. Milton, therefore, at times echoed rather

than undercut their views of proper military conduct. It would seem that his attitude toward these books and perhaps toward the war conduct they recommended need not have been totally disapproving. Accordingly, some readers may feel that it was not war that Milton condemned but Satanic war.

Whether or not we agree that Milton aimed in *Paradise Lost* to reprove the militarists of his time, we cannot help being affected by the portrait of Satan and his angels as thorough and well-disciplined Renaissance soldiers that Freeman constructs for us. With knowledge not only of the war books he describes, but of things military throughout the ages (there is an interesting account of the military aspects of the bee simile in the final section), Freeman persuades us how important contemporary military theories were to the characterization of Satan and his angels as soldiers. Previous books have shown us how Milton used the traditions of literary warfare—of epic and romance. Freeman has added another dimension by making us see that Milton was also a student of theoretical warfare, and so intended in *Paradise Lost* to depict not only the wars of Homer and Virgil but warfare as designed by the theoreticians most respected by his age.

<div align="right">Stella P. Revard</div>

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The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act by Fredric Jameson. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981. Pp. $19.50.

In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson has produced another vital contribution to cultural study, packed with solid argument yet glittering with energy and urgency. There is a long theoretical chapter, followed by studies of Balzac, Gissing and Conrad; but the real structure of the book is more complex and more closely interlocking than this, and hinges on a polemic defence of the concept of interpretation. With post-structuralists playing quasi-Edenic games on all sides, these could be seen as hard times for Jamesonian "metacommentary," which is here refined in various ways. It is seen as a method for focusing textual study in such a way as to provide a continuous pretext for engagement with other literary-critical methods; as a device for ensuring movement between various "horizons" of attention, from the local and stylistic to the world-historical; and, I believe most interestingly, as a way of adapting certain structuralist perceptions, through a process of "radical historicisation and problematisation," and pressing them into service as a politically subordinate technique, but one peculiarly appropriate for laying bare the mechanisms of the static and frozen world of ideology. The instrument of which Jameson is fondest is Greimas' semiotic rectangle, which he puts to brilliant use in his analysis of *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*.

The polemic takes place athwart the axis of Althusserianism, for Jameson is attempting to show that although, with Althusser, we have to agree about history as actual absence, history nonetheless returns to us, exclusively in the form of narrativization, collective fictions about the past which are susceptible of

interpretation and can be made to yield contents within the political uncon-
scious. One of the features of these fictions is that they are always tidier than
the Real; following Poulantzas, Jameson uses this as a starting-point for a
sophistication of the debate about the historical succession of modes of pro-
duction, arguing for " overlay and structural coexistence " (p. 95) of different
modes as the repressed historical truth; and, in parallel, he argues against the
current dismissal of the diachronic, using the suggestive model of the X-ray to
demonstrate how the changing forms of history may be apprehended through
observation of the sediment, the fossils and remains thrown up by subterranean
burrowings through time.

   And there is very much more: Jameson's by now customary, but still instruc-
tive, emphasis on the theological as ideological model and as source of
thinking about technique; his subtle insistence on the need for a continuous
rereading of Hegel; a flexible diagnosis of authorial strategies of containment; and
a ready provision for a plurality of working methods, provided this is always
accompanied by commentary on historical limitation. But he would be the
first to agree that cultural criticism cannot proceed by admiration and circum-
spect paraphrase, and it seems worthwhile to mention, albeit very briefly, four
problems. The " construction of the bourgeois subject in emergent capitalism
and its schizophrenic disintegration in our own time " (p. 12), for instance, is a
faulty, if current, slogan: within the eighteenth century, a correctly historical
interpretation can detect the shapes of disintegration from Defoe to the Gothic,
citing some variant of schizophrenia as part of the original repressed subtext
beneath the pressure to synthetic rewriting. And although the Althusserian
emphasis on totality of structure as a replacement for homological simplicities
is welcome, Jameson cannot entirely avoid " expressive causality " in, for instance,
his adaptations of Hjelmslev and, more particularly, his comments on Conrad's
use of the visual as an alternative to Jamesian " point of view " (pp. 99, 231).
His process of historicizing cultural categories is, perhaps of necessity, incom-
plete: in his analysis of " magical " narrative, he stops short at the formalist
concept of the " donor " as an essential position within story (p. 126), without
noting the economic content of the hypocrisy and lying which often accompanies
the " gifts " of fairy story and legend. Finally, and most significantly, a principal
argument of the book is that narrative is not reflection but symbolic *act*, a
transformation of prior materials; this is a valuable emphasis, but Jameson tends to
slide into asserting that the particular act at stake is always one of attempted
resolution of contradiction. Again, this may often be the case, but there seems
to be a danger here of reifying and fixing the " literary " into a specific location
within a revised " total structure," whereas the functions devolved onto the
literary may be more various than that. Indeed, this appears to be the
suspicion which prompts the closing comments on the relations between ideo-
logical and utopian functioning, but these are too brief to carry the weight of
the rest of his arguments.

   If radical historicization of concepts and categories is the process through
which criticism has its life, then perhaps a few comments on the political un-
conscious of *The Political Unconscious* would be useful, and here again Greimas'
rectangle can serve a purpose. My suggestion, which cannot be here developed

fully, is that the ideological closure cited within this book turns on the terms "exhibit," "display," "scandal" and "propriety" (used almost always adverbially as in "a properly Marxist analysis"). Jameson, I think, would want to see these oft-repeated categories as the scheme of an ideological antinomy; and the antinomy seems to me to be about the possibility of offending against critical and political acceptances in a world of liberal collusions (correctly connected by him with a contempt for the reality of political difference). This, however, lies on the first, stylistic horizon of interpretation; moving to the second, in which the shape of modes of production can be revealed, we can mention two opposing features of the text: first, its evident fascination with the theory of schizophrenic writing, as exemplified in the work of Deleuze and Guattari; second, the insistence within *The Political Unconscious* on Jameson's own previous work ("I have suggested elsewhere that" is a key phrase). This, certainly, can be made to reveal a dislocation within the literary mode of production; there is a sense in which Jameson appears to wish the continuity of his own work to stand against the fragmented nature of imaginative and critical process in the late twentieth century. And perhaps we can press this contradiction a little further, and assign it to the realm of economic disjunction between the monopoly assimilation represented in the multinational corporation and discreteness and fragmentation of the world of objects implicit in manic consumerism—to use the historical terms in which he frequently frames his own argument. The mode of interpretation here advocated would require for its completion in this particular instance an engagement with the third, global horizon at which the overall destiny of man makes its reappearance; that, perhaps, should not be essayed in a review, but the thought of its possibility, and of its compatibility with a rigorously historical Marxism, is a stimulus challenging enough to make *The Political Unconscious* an essential work.

<div style="text-align: right">DAVID PUNTER</div>

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Comic Faith: The Great Tradition from Austen to Joyce, by Robert M. Polhemus. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980. Pp. x + 189. $15.00.

As the title of Robert Polhemus' book, *Comic Faith*, indicates, he believes that, among the novelists he studies in nineteenth century England, comedy has become a replacement for religious feeling. His purpose is to "stress the connection in these works between their comic intentions and religious concerns." As confidence in religious modes of redemption fades, a spirit of affirmation must be sought in the vitality of human imagination itself—imagination playing not upon spiritual aspirations, but upon worldly experience. Thus Polhemus studies major novels of notably "worldly" writers, beginning with Jane Austen's *Emma*, and continuing through Peacock, Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Meredith, and Joyce. In each he notes the absence or insufficiency of controlling religious vision, and the presence, instead, of a "comic vision," the writer's particular

" insight and sense of the world that allows him or her to find mirth, to justify life, and imagine means of the benevolent regeneration of the future."

In Austen's comic vision must attempt to reconcile Austen's intelligence and ironic outlook with her need to preserve " orthodox allegiances." Comedy allows one to see the faults of wilfulness and yet to affirm individualism, by opening the way for internalized analysis and play, and for the growth of consciousness that leads ultimately to union with another. As " union " is the key concept in Austen's book, communion governs Thomas Love Peacock's vision in *Nightmare Abbey*. Polhemus argues that the novel's diverse, obsessive, idea-driven characters represent aspects of the larger human community, brought together through the urbane communion of those Bacchanalian dinners. In Dickens the tension with religion is sharper, for *Martin Chuzzlewit*, perhaps his greatest comic work, is beset with Biblical language, with Pecksniffian moralistic cant, with the pious homiletics of Tom Pinch; and it hangs loosely on the structure of the work of spiritual reformation. Polhemus shrewdly diagnoses the ambivalence of Dickens toward his own moralizing bent, parodied often in his creations.

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, for all its echoes of Bunyan and Ecclesiastes, is one of the most worldly books in the literature, yet Polhemus feels that its cynicism is the cynicism of sacrilege and iconoclasm, of a perspective that stems from religious absence, in a man who " cannot find God or a celestial plan to redeem the world." Trollope's *Barchester Towers* responds to a secularized, politicised religion in a " corporate " community with an invocation of faith in a changing earthly culture. By the time of Meredith's *The Egoist*, Judeo-Christian belief has become anachronistic, and secular comedy can best teach morality, penetrating the shams of egoism to teach " respect for cumulative reason and the process of civilization." Lewis Carroll, of all these figures probably the one most troubled by Doubt, takes in *Through the Looking-Glass* the way of regression, to childhood's freedom and sense of identity, to play and to a more primal ethics. Finally, in " Shem " in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* all the shibboleths of the sacred are discarded, and redemption rises through celebration of the profane—the earthly way.

The Victorians felt the slippage of religious conviction keenly—we have ample evidence of that in their strenuous church-going, church building, evangelicalism, and preaching of duty and morality. And we have ample evidence of the Victorian propensity to sanctify worldly and material concerns. Polhemus rightly sees comedy as a life-affirming expression, one that reconciles us to our worldly preoccupations and desires. Yet, as he is the first to point out, this process had been occurring gradually for some time: " the revival of, and comparatively tolerant attitude toward, comic art in the British Reformation, Renaissance, and Restoration eras signifies the widespread ideological turning-back-to-the-world." Comedy had traditionally, as he notes, functioned as a reconciliation to the mundane. Consequently, it is difficult to perceive the dialectic of the religious and the comic working acutely in these writers of the nineteenth century. The tolerance that comedy inculcates had been long established, and even though religiously based structural forms and religious language may inform these books, there is rarely any strong sense of the struggle between sacred and comic visions.

Polhemus' studies do not give one the impression that a writer such as Meredith or Trollope is consciously, systematically developing a comic vision in response to the loss of belief in religion, or even as a turning to the worldly. This means that the tension implicit in an assertion of "comic Faith" is muted. Comedy still can be a means of faith, but not one achieved by each of these writers through a dialectic with traditional modes of belief.

Polhemus' self-described "procedure" makes clear that his book was never intended simply to demonstrate such a dialectical relationship, and that in large part what he seeks to do is explore the richness and variation of comic art. And this he does well, often eloquently. His case for the comedy of regression in Carroll is particularly well argued; the chapter on *The Egoist* is sensitive and deft; and throughout one encounters highly insightful readings, as in his observation of the way in which Becky Sharp's spontaneity habitually settles into some form of inanimateness or conventional calculation, or in his demonstration of the use of conversation in Trollope to allow characters to redefine themselves, or in his description of the ways of diversion in *Alice*.

It is Polhemus' experientially open sensibility, in fact, that allows us to discern a significant motif that emerges from his study. He frequently shows how comedy encourages us to take delight in human selfishness and self-seeking. In too many theoretical writings on the comic, this element has been denied, on the assumption that comedy's "tendentious" character implies that our pleasure comes from seeing selfishness exposed and ridiculed. In actuality, we often enjoy the foibles of others, and Polhemus compellingly argues that in a writer such as Austen the play of ironic, reflexive consciousness that is the path to true morality occurs within the matrix of Emma's self-seeking. One is struck, as one moves through this book, by the number of instances in which nineteenth-century fictional comedy explores elements of egoism, self-assertion, or self-protection. Meredith's novel offers the most obvious example, in which the often acerbic, but finally metamorphic comic spirit finds its field of play in male egoism. Polhemus writes: "Meredith, with his love and feel for nature, was groping for a comic vision that would transcend the egoistical basis of both divine comedy and human comedy. He was pushing for a change of allegiance from self to species and world organism: no longer To thine own self be true; instead, Be true to the whole earth and humanity."

One can observe similar patterns in *Vanity Fair* (where comedy's object is the competitive, acquisitive urge), in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (where the richest humor springs from the devices of Sara Gamp, Pecksniff, and Montague Tigg), in Carroll's *Alice*, and in *Barchester Towers*. Even in *Nightmare Abbey* the isolation and self-absorption of the various intellectual types triggers the comic distancing that allows us to move on to the objective of the work: a fuller perspective on human nature. Polhemus has identified a process that, in these novels at least, occurs again and again. In his studies, comedy springs from the dynamics of egoism or self-assertion, and its metamorphic powers are then used to transform and redirect such impulses in a way that provides us with a broader, more regenerative, perspective. *Barchester Towers* makes a nice case in point, for Trollope shows how commonality has been broken into factionalism and selfishness, and then, as Polhemus demonstrates, he employs his comic

vision to establish a community of outlook and common sense among his readers. True to the times, Victorian comic writers began to look at the self-absorbed quality of modern life. True also to their culture, they sought to affirm community. As this effort became more and more an act of faith, and as the comic became the means for putting the personal into broader perspective, they did in fact develop another kind of comic faith.

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Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody by Charles O. Hartman. Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1980. Pp. x + 199. $14.00.

Free verse was one of the revolutions, along with Imagism and other associated movements, that created modern poetry. The literary battles caused by its advent into English poetry early in this century belong to literary history, but Charles O. Hartman knows that it is still necessary to state unambiguously, " Free verse, like all verse, is prosodically ordered and not aimless " (p. 24). Just what that prosodic order is, what remains that distinguishes verse from prose after a regular meter, patterns of end-rhyme, and fixed stanza-forms are gone, has received various critical interpretations, but the issue has still not been resolved by literary criticism. Something—and it may be something in the nature of the critical interpretations themselves—has prevented our having a comprehensive poetics of modern poetry.

Hartman modestly presents his book as an " essay " on the prosody of free verse, not as a definitive study of modern poetics. In this lucid and intelligent work he is trying out two related ideas about the prosodic order of modern poetry. Both ideas derive from traditional concepts in literary criticism, and they are adapted and renewed by Hartman to deal with free verse. The line-by-line prosodic organization of free verse, he argues, lies in the " counterpoint " of syntax and lineation, and the overall structure of free verse lies in a fusion of pattern and meaning which he calls " discovered form."

The idea of prosodic " counterpoint " is an analogy taken from music (not a particularly accurate one, but it serves). Also known in literary criticism as " syncopation " or simply " tension," it is usually used to describe the effects of the various and irregularly changing movements of language heard against a steady background of regular meter: the interplay of an actual rhythm and an abstract rhythm. The word itself seems to have entered literary criticism in Gerard Manley Hopkins' " Author's Preface," where Hopkins described counterpoint in poetry as " the superinducing or *mounting* of a new rhythm " upon the basic metrical pattern so that " two rhythms are in some manner running at once " (*Poems*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, 4th ed. corrected [1970], p. 46). But there is no metrical pattern in free verse, and Hartman uses " counterpoint " to mean instead the interplay between the semantic rhythms of phrases and sentences and the rhythms of the verse-line itself. Lineation is the one prosodic convention kept by all free verse; it is a " formal resource " which in free

verse can serve in the place of meter and end-rhyme. Hartman's central point, then, is that the counterpoint between syntax and lineation is the general basis of free-verse prosody.

There is some question, of course, whether we can *hear* the lineation in a free-verse poem, and then hear it in counterpoint against the rhythms of syntax. Hartman suggests that the convention of lineation (something seen) has created the convention of a pause (something heard) at the end of a line, and poets now can "assume the pause as a product of lineation and use it to interrupt syntactical units" (p. 73). His most convincing proof, however, comes in his many excellent demonstrations that this is in fact what poets do. To take just one example, a version of Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" in which line-endings correspond with the breaks made by syntax and punctuation is set beside the version Auden actually wrote, in which line-endings regularly break up the syntactical units of phrases and sentences, and syntactical pauses or complete stops break up the formal unit of the line. The first version yields a logical but dull prosody, and a rather weary and tedious voice in the poem; Auden's version, in contrast, presents a far more complicated and energetic prosody, and adds an emerging awe and even celebration to the voice in the poem. Auden's prosodic counterpoint, in other words, changes not only how the poem sounds but what the poem means. Prosody, Hartman affirms, is always in the service of meaning.

The close relationship of prosody and meaning is a principle that also guides the other main topic of Hartman's book, which concerns the overall form of free-verse poems. Along with metrical lines, free verse abandoned regular stanza-forms. Hartman's idea of a "discovered form" unique to each poem renews the Coleridgean concept of "organic form." The apparently haphazard indentions, spacings, and stanza-breaks of a free-verse poem, he writes, are formal patterns which both follow and guide the patterns of meaning in the poem. The distinction between "form" and "content," in fact, dissolves, for the meaning of a poem inheres as much in form as in content—the form becomes the content. "Discovered form" is not a "box" but an "incarnation" (p. 89). A careful analysis of Wallace Stevens' "Valley Candle," for example, shows us that "Meaning arises not from what the poem says, but from what it does and the doing that it represents" (p. 85).

Free Verse is a helpful and clearly-written book. Hartman works in the practical tradition of Anglo-American criticism: he listens carefully to poems and to what poets have said about poetry. Common sense and a good ear are the real foundations of his study; he steers clear of unnecessary jargon, elaborate systems, and the imposition of external intellectual categories on the living language of poems. Readers of poetry can enter this book with hope and leave it with gratitude. They will also leave it with thoughts and questions that range beyond, or behind, the scope of Hartman's essay. It seems clear, for example, that any prosodic order must be drawn from language. Hartman's ideas of "counterpoint" and "discovered form" describe something that poets do, some of them very skillfully (such as William Carlos Williams). But that is not all they do. There is an ordering music in the sounds of words—a rhythm emerging from the echoing of internal rhymes, alliterations, assonances, con-

sonances, word-repetitions—that also is basic to free-verse prosody. This rhythm can be used to support the line-unit, but it is radically a separate system of rhythm which can reach across lines and itself create a counterpoint against both lineation and syntax. There is also a music drawn from the phrasal rhythms of speech. These are units of rhythm inherent in the spoken language, made up of progressions of stress, juncture, quantity, pitch—all the elements that give a distinctive contour to a spoken English phrase. Phrasal units can be repeated and varied in a manner analogous to the recurrence of identity and variation in the metrical units of traditional prosody. Wallace Stevens used this music beautifully, but it is an organizing principle of poetry at least as old as Wyatt. (Hartman is of course aware of these systems of rhythm, but he considers the first to be merely an ornament of the line-unit, and he rejects the second as a possibility for prosody.) Finally, there is a "syntax" in modern poetry which is not that of prose, a syntax of perceptions and images, and of sudden jumps and complex simultaneities, which cannot be accounted for by a traditionally conceived system of prosody. Ezra Pound's poetry often depends on such "syntax," but it is not a syntax that can be heard or described by prosodic "counterpoint." The forms we have inherited for discussing these issues are the central critical problem; we simply do not yet have the critical forms for dealing with modern poetry.

When we do develop those critical forms, when we have a poetics of modern poetry, the relationship between prosody and meaning—the idea of "organic form," if we choose to keep that term—will be central. But the relationship between sound, rhythm, and poetic form on the one hand, and the lexical and syntactical meaning of a poem on the other, cannot be seen as in any way direct or linear. It is clear that good poets bring together prosody and meaning; but that is not the same thing as saying "prosody both determines and derives from meaning" (p. 179). This view of "organic form" loses sight of the basically independent nature, even in free verse, of sound, rhythm, and form. It neglects human delight in form itself, and the artist's delight in his materials and his own performance. Moreover, though sound, rhythm, and form certainly communicate, they do not speak the same language spoken by lexis and syntax, and they cannot "mean" the same things. If poets can bring these two languages together in poems, can make prosody seem an echo to the sense, it is because the mind experiences movements which are not "sense" but which can be made into the rhythms and forms of sense—rhythms of perceiving and thinking which attend perception and thought. The poem speaks in both languages, and the good reader hears both. What happens in the poem and what happens in the reader are not simple relationships—not the direct mimesis of meaning by rhythm, or the direct enactment of idea by form—but a complex ordering of kinships in territories still to be mapped.

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Interpretation: *An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*, by P. D. Juhl.
    Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. Pp. x + 332. $20.00.

Juhl's book is the first since Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* to survey the
entire range of problems involved in current interpretive theory. Since the
publication of the latter in 1967, philosophers and critics in America and Germany
have submitted the issues Hirsch treated to analytic scrutiny, and a renewed
interest in the philosophy of language and concepts of intention has altered
the ways in which these issues are now perceived. Within this tradition, Juhl
has proposed a novel thesis about the relationship between intention and meaning.
The intricate arguments of others are not fully represented in his book, but he
treats the most important of them and calls attention to the relevant literature in
footnotes. That I disagree with much of what he says is less an objective criticism
of his book than a tribute to its provocativeness and an acknowledgment of the
interest with which I read it.

His main claims are these: (1) " a statement about the meaning of a work *is*
a statement about the author's intention " (i. e., one analytically entails the other);
(2) our construal of a literary work " is determined not by our picture of the
so-called implied author, but rather by our picture of the real, historical
person " ; and (3) " a literary work has one and only one correct interpretation "
(pp. 12-13). A skeletal account of the arguments that support these claims can be
acquired by reading the introductory and concluding sections of each chapter.
Rather than recapitulating Juhl's lucid summaries, I shall try to describe the
context within which his arguments take on their importance, and the problems
they entail.

In claiming that there is an inherent or analytic relationship between authorial
intention and literary meaning, Juhl implies that no empirical evidence can con-
trovert his assertion, and that his definitions of the words " meaning " and
" intention " are reportive, not stipulative. The discovery of analytic truths is a
tricky business. Rather than simply disproving arguments against them, one
must show that they really assume what they intend to deny. If the demon-
stration is successful, nothing in the world of empirical evidence and conclusions
has been called into question. What then is changed? Only our way of seeing,
or our way of using words.

Assuming (without reason) that we know what " meaning " means, we might
begin by examining the word " intention." Within the narrow confines of
analytic philosophy, one recent writer has discriminated nine uses of the term.
For cruder purposes, I shall distinguish four: (1) " intention " as intentionality
in the phenomenological sense, the property of consciousness whereby it intends
or refers to an object; (2) the sense emphasized by Anscombe and others in
the Anglo-American philosophical tradition, intention as purpose or teleological
aim, when an action is performed to achieve a certain end (Wimsatt and Beards-
ley belatedly acknowledged the importance of this sense when, seven years after
" The Intentional Fallacy " they confessed that the " whole actual meaning " of a
literary work might legitimately be called its " intent " [*Dictionary of World
Literature*, pp. 231-32].); (3) in ordinary usage, " intention " as what one plans
and wills to do in the future and in this sense clearly distinguished from achieve-

ment (this meaning is crucial to the best-known arguments of Wimsatt and Beardsley); (4) again in ordinary usage, intentional actions as opposed to those that are habitual, unconscious, "unconsciously" intended, or those having unintended consequences.

What then of Juhl's claim that a literary work *necessarily* means what the author intended it to mean (a position more conservative than that of Hirsch, whose arguments are criticized in the first chapter)? From a phenomenological point of view (definition 1 above) the claim is unexceptionable. To mean *is* to intend, and the erosion of a rock that coincidentally produced an English sentence (one of Juhl's examples) would not in this sense have any meaning. Likewise, as Juhl argues in chapters three and four, to say that one part of a text has a certain meaning because of its relationship to the whole entails a concept of human intention (definition 2 above): "coherence" is a criterion of meaning only if there is an intention to cohere. (Since the natural sciences use coherence as a test of truth, one might be forced to argue that they too presuppose an intentional creator—an argument that has been refurbished for intentionalism by Robert Hambourger in *Intention and Intentionality*, ed. C. Diamond and J. Teichman). Juhl is most convincing when he recapitulates arguments that oppose the intentionalist thesis and shows that their authors have, unintentionally, relied on assumptions about authorial intention. When he discusses Beardsley's interpretation of a poem by Wordsworth, accepting Beardsley's arguments but pointing out that the word "intention" can be inserted in them without altering the character of the evidence, one feels that his thesis is truly analytic.

So long as his argument remains analytic, it cannot be challenged, nor can it make any practical difference. But once he implies that evidence about intentions is evidence about meaning, his argument has become perforce synthetic. He strays from his original definition of "author's intention" as "what he meant by the words he used" (tautologically true, in definitions 1 and 2 above) to show that we can obtain evidence about intentions that points to a particular meaning. The unstated assumption—or rather, analytic claim—underlying the transition appears ot be this: that an author "intends" a life-meaning whereby the intention to mean something in writing a particular work is subtended by his other writings, beliefs, statements of intention, thoughts, etc. It is only on the basis of this claim that there could be an analytic relationship (involving coherence) between intending to mean in one act of writing and intentions, beliefs, values on other occasions. Short of guaranteeing the intentional coherence of a life, inference from one act to another is ungrounded and/or synthetic; if the grounding is analytic, it cannot affect the practice of interpretation.

It is to Juhl's credit that he recognizes this problem and eventually dismembers the integral "intention" that previously served as a referent for establishing meaning: "a text may be better evidence of a man's intention than his explicit statement" (p. 147); "artists no less than other people change their minds, contradict themselves, or are ambivalent in their attitudes" (p. 188). The first of these statements reveals that the word "intention" is used in two senses. When the text serves as good evidence of the author's "intention," the word is used in the analytic sense—intention and meaning are the same. When "explicit staetment" of intention is *not* unquestionable evidence about meaning,

then "intention" has one of its ordinary uses, in which declared intention and meaning may fail to match.

The best evidence Juhl presents in opposition to his own thesis appears when he analyzes the arguments of other critics. Typically, they make up an example and then explain what it demonstrates—i. e., what they intend it to mean. But Juhl disagrees with them. How can he do so, given his assumption that the example means what its creator intended it to mean? The problem is an important one because literary works seem very like the imaginary examples used by philosophers, except that the former are not accompanied by an explanation of the meaning they are intended to illustrate.

Juhl denies that literary language is different in kind, or entails different interpretive conventions, than ordinary uses of language. Like speech-act critics, he uses single sentences as examples in discussing problems of ambiguity. One may admit that in understanding the succesive sentences of a novel, for example, we make decisions about meaning very much as we would in understanding everyday language, yet deny that the interpretation of the *whole* novel, extrapolating from an instance to a general "meaning," is the same sort of interpretive act. There is an odd lacuna in his overall argument. If literary meaning is the author's intentional meaning, one might expect Juhl to claim that a literary work "has one and only one correct interpretation" by virtue of the (analytic) fact that authors intend only one meaning. But he clearly and carefully says that he is simply arguing in favor of this conclusion in the last chapter of the book. *If* a work has just one meaning, then by his thesis that fact can *only* result from the author's intending just one meaning; should an author intend more than one, Juhl would of necessity disavow the general applicability of his argument. The lack of reference to authorial intention in this chapter is one of the puzzles of the book.

He concludes that "there is good reason to believe that any interpretation of a given text can in principle be shown to be correct or incorrect," but that "this thesis does not reduce or eliminate multiplicity of meaning in the usual sense.... Nor am I claiming that we can in fact resolve any significant number of interpretive controversies" (p. 236). In a sense, then, his book is in the end analytic: it may provide "reason to believe" but does not alter the practice of interpretation. The arguments against other critics are more convincing than those in favor of his own position (Peter Szondi is anatomized with particular precision in the Appendix). If Juhl is right in arguing that literary interpretation is, in all essential respects, like interpretation of other uses of language, there is really no place for a "philosophy *of criticism*," as distinct from philosophy in general, and critics might turn their attention to what philosophers say on the subject of intention. Juhl provides an introduction to the subject, but the opponents of Grice deserve a hearing. John Biro's "Intentionalism in the Theory of Meaning" (*Monist*, 62 [1979], 238-58) is one of many articles that challenge his view, which Biro refers to as "meaning nominalism." In the foregoing critique, I have tried to accept Juhl's assumptions and argue against the inferences he makes from them; opponents of his position (for example, new critics and deconstructionists) will in all likelihood take issue with his assumptions.

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