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Book Reviews

Names on Trees: Ariosto into Art by Rensselaer W. Lee. Princeton Essays on the Arts, 3. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. xiv + 124. \$14.50 cloth, \$5.95 paper.

Rensselaer W. Lee, whose *Ut Pictura Poesis* (1940) has long provided the standard introduction to the Renaissance theory of the mimetic relationship between poetry and painting, now puts us further in his debt with this succinct, lively study of a particular instance of that relationship: the many images depicting Ariosto's episode of Angelica and Medoro carving their linked names all over the pastoral landscape in which their love has burgeoned (*Orlando Furioso* xix). In *Names on Trees*, Lee examines pictorial examples of this subject spanning several hundred years of European (and American) art, and one can but applaud the ease with which he carries his great learning and the graceful prose in which he clothes it. Still, gratitude must be alloyed with regret: at the brevity of the study, which, excluding notes, comprises but 84 pages, many given over wholly or in part to illustrations; at the fragmentation of discourse, and consequent loss of cumulative argumentative force, that results from the division of the spare text into nine chapters; and, above all, at lost opportunities to explore some of the critical issues raised by the many and varied visual responses to the challenge of Ariosto's amorous episode.

As Lee says in his preface, the "main concern" of *Names on Trees* is "the interpretation by the painters of [the] human, original, and influential pastoral" of Angelica and Medoro, or, more precisely, of its focal moment when the lovers put knife to bark in public testimony of their shared passion. In the first two chapters, Lee locates the episode at the confluence of two cultural streams. Chapter One, "Liber Naturae," sketches the topos of Nature as a book, starting with the medieval conception that all creatures, as well as Nature as a whole, are books in which we can learn about the Creator. Pivoting on Shakespeare's *As You Like It*—a play embodying the "Renaissance discovery of the world" and "the fresh, original, and observant poetry of a new age" (p. 5)—Lee arrives at his particular subject by means of Orlando (the name ironically recalling Ariosto's maddened hero?), who wishes to inscribe Rosalind's name on every tree. Here "the Book of Nature becomes as well a series of blank leaves...not only symbolically but almost literally a book on whose pages a lover can record the amatory infusions of his heart and the name of his girl" (p. 6). Angelica and Medoro, when they begin carving, will likewise trivialize the venerable topos with their "grace note in the long history of the medieval metaphor, nature a book" (pp. 6-7). Lee's history-of-ideas approach should be supplemented by noting that the act of carving names on trees would be especially significant to Renaissance painters, conscious as they were of the rivalry between verbal and visual art: tree-writing appropriated to the poet's realm of language that natural landscape which

was the painter's special preserve. Such poetic aggression could best be met and overcome by in turn appropriating the arboreal compositions of Angelica and Medoro as a subject for visual representation. Thus paintings of the Ariostan subject can be seen as exemplars (or heirs) of a noble tradition of *paragone*.

Chapter Two surveys classical antecedents of Ariosto's tree-writing episode: not only Ovid's fifth *Heroides* (Oenone to Paris), the Ferrarese master's clearest inspiration, but also Virgil, Propertius, and others. These pastoral incidents, ignored by medieval poets, reappear in lyrics of Boiardo, and in Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, before finding an especially congenial setting of "new freshness and color" (p. 11) in the *Furioso*. Chapter Three brings us to Ariosto's poem, specifically to an all-too-brief survey of some visual depictions of Angelica's adventures before she and Medoro begin inscribing their names on trees and rocks. With Chapter Four, "Locus Amoenus," we enter the heart of Lee's study: the pastoral, tree-carving interlude in Canto xix.

Lee's reading of the episode stresses its pastoral simplicity and Ariosto's transformation of a moment that is elegiac for Ovid and other classical poets into one that celebrates "intense, unalloyed, present happiness" (p. 30). He reiterates this interpretation on p. 38 ("the felicity of love in idleness enjoyed by Ariosto's lovers"), p. 71 ("Ariosto's warm and candid idyll"), and elsewhere, and it controls his judgments on all the depictions of the scene that he discusses. Unfortunately, such a reading ignores the undercutting humor of the lovers' obsessive inscription of every possible tree, sufficiently soft stone, and interior wall, and misses as well the irony of how all this idyllic literary self-expression will shortly wreak havoc on Orlando's sanity. Nor does Lee comment on the scene's paradigmatic exposition of the theme of love inspiring artistic creation, although it functions as a parody before the fact of Sidney's injunction to himself in *Astrophel and Stella*, "look in your heart and write." Perhaps most debatable in Lee's approach to his subject is his inconsistent treatment of Ariosto and the painters in respect of their freedom to interpret their sources innovatively. Ariosto's adaptation of Ovid's Oenone shows his "brilliant gift of pouring very old wine into very attractive new bottles" (p. 30), but visual artists are to be judged by the fidelity with which they reproduce what Lee takes to be the univocal mood and meaning of the *Furioso* passage. Thus, for example, "a particular artistic style may be hospitable or inhospitable to the quality of Ariosto's poetry. When the pictorial vehicle is the contrived ingenuity and cool abstractness of the Mannerist style of the middle and late sixteenth century, the picture itself may be ingenious or interesting, but the uncomplicated freshness and charm of Ariosto's narrative may fare badly" (pp. 34-35).

For Lee, the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* requires the painter to copy the poetic subject faithfully, in tone as well as content, or risk censure for following "canons of style" which "throw up artificial barriers between [in this case] the simplicity of the poet's pristine narrative and its *true interpretation* by the sister art of painting" (p. 38; emphasis mine). Recent work by David Rosand, Svetlana Alpers, and others suggests that we should analyze carefully, and value, the reinterpretation of classical myths by humanist painters in their

adaptations of Ovid, Philostratus, *et alia*; surely visual rethinkings of Ariosto's "modern" mythological subject deserve similar respect for their originality, rather than denigration for departing from a "true interpretation."

Consistent with his prescriptive approach, Lee prefers "the greater closeness to reality that marks the spiritual climate and artistic expression of the seventeenth century" (p. 41) over the Mannerist paintings and engravings he discusses in Chapter Four, and so in Chapter Five, "Baroque," we learn that "it was inevitable that the pictorial interpretation of Ariosto would thrive on this change" of aesthetic (p. 43). Lee singles out artists of the Venetian school—Guercino, Liberi, Blanchard—for particular praise. Chapter Six catalogues Rococo treatments less to Lee's liking, including a revival of Michelangelo-inspired motifs and figures that he finds "mere *forza d'arte*, lacking verisimilitude, and dramatically vacant" (p. 60). Could one not also read the combination of Michelangelo's heroic-Christian forms and Ariosto's pastoral-erotic motifs as an act of artistic synthesis parallel in intent (whatever its success) to Ariosto's own combination of Ovidian and chivalric narrative materials?

Among eighteenth-century artists, the Venetians Sebastiano Ricci and Giambattista Tiepolo earn praise; in their work, "poetry changes into painting by an unforced and natural process" (p. 64). Chapter Seven, "Pastoral Twilight," records the petering out of the tradition of Angelica-Medoro paintings in the nineteenth century, while Chapter Eight, "Variations on a Theme," inspects some initial-carving images perhaps inspired by Ariosto's lovers, but not directly in the Angelica-Medoro, Oenone-Paris traditions. Chapter Nine, "Reprise and Epilogue," offers final examples of the "old convention" of carving names on trees "put to new, imaginative uses" (p. 84)—an indication that such innovation is lauable in later art, not too closely dependent on Ariosto.

Learned and entertaining as Professor Lee's enterprise is, its interpretive focus remains narrow. His chosen episode in Ariosto offers painters more points of departure than he allows it. One of its aims is the serio-comic presentation of an art that dominates (and, by its thousands of carved signatures, disfigures) nature through the force of love. Such a self-conscious reference to the artist's imposition of his/her powers on the external world may well have inspired, and may justify, the Mannerist responses Lee decries in sixteenth-century depictions of the episode. If, as I have suggested, the Angelica-Medoro tree-carving moment also embodies (and teases) the theme of love inspiring art, then the slung leg motif which, as Lee notes with disapproval, appears so frequently in paintings on this subject has been inserted by the painter to reinforce the link between sexual and artistic energies, not simply as a Mannerist excrescence.

One further aspect, at least, of the tradition of Angelica-Medoro paintings would have profited from Professor Lee's attention, given his special qualifications to explicate the *ut pictura poesis* topos. In many of the images he cites, the painter shows Medoro carving, or pointing to what he has carved, while Angelica watches attentively. (This distribution of roles, incidentally, constitutes an interesting instance of sexism, for in *Orlando Furioso* xix.34-36 the subject of the verbs of writing and carving is Angelica, not Medoro.) Nothing in Ariosto's text sanctions this moment, which in fact depicts an artist demonstrating or explaining his work to his rapt audience, and thus calls our attention

to the role played by the painter as interpreter, rather than simply illustrator, of another (verbal) artist's work. In the version of *Angelica and Medoro* by Michele Rocca in the Galleria Comunale, Prado—not reproduced by Lee, who cites instead the Rocca in the Walters Gallery, Baltimore (fig. 43)—this self-conscious interest in interpretation is underscored by two putti in the lower right corner of the painting who look at an earlier instance of the artist-lover's handiwork, the names carved in a large rock. One points out the names to the other in a gesture that parodies and reinforces the didactic component of the main figure group, in which both lovers gaze upward, as if spellbound, at the tree above them in the trunk of which Medoro is again incising their names.

Despite its unwillingness to consider analytically some of the creative uses to which humanist painters put Ariosto's poetic subject in their images, Lee's book remains handsome, useful, delightful to read, and carefully prepared. (I have found only two errors: footnote 61 puts the operative Angelica-Medoro octave in canto ix of the *Furioso* instead of canto xix, and in footnote 118 Vincenzo de Rossi's *Theseus and Helen* should be *Paris and Helen*.) Only a clear sense of the importance of the subject—a sense we owe in good part to his labors over the last four decades and more—leads me to wish he had cut into it more deeply.

R. W. HANNING

Columbia University

The Growth of a Personal Voice: Piers Plowman and The Faerie Queene by

Judith H. Anderson. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976.

Pp. 240. \$15.00.

A particular interest attaches to the "I" of medieval and Renaissance poems, perhaps because we are tantalized by the relationship of the older poets to their narrators. It takes a great effort of the historical imagination to begin to deduce what the first person signified at a time when self-expression was subordinate to specific rhetorical goals. Judith Anderson has taken on the formidable task of looking for the poet himself in two works which by their very nature are committed to a representation of the truth in terms that are universal. She finds, however, that in both *Piers Plowman* and *The Faerie Queene*, the poet's role evolved with the writing of his poem until finally something like a personal voice is heard; in other words, narrator and poet tend ultimately to merge. At the same time, allegory in its impersonal, objective aspects is left behind as the poet comes face to face with himself and with his God.

When A. C. Hamilton published in 1961 his important essay on the relationship between *Piers Plowman* and *The Faerie Queene*, he made the point that these poems have in common not only certain moral concerns but also the theme of the quest. In Professor Anderson's book, the quest is treated as actually a search for the poet's own self; his self-awareness becomes the all-important value, to be achieved if necessary at the expense of his allegory. Yet

the reader of *The Growth of a Personal Voice* may be tempted to ask: what supreme value should be associated with the poet's own intervention into his poem? What teleology decrees that the allegorical poem should culminate either in self-expression or in self-discovery? Unquestioned assumptions may leave this book open to criticism that it neglects genre and style as determinants of meaning. Perhaps only by placing the consideration of the "I" of each of these poems within its specific artistic context can we possibly see what the poet intended. But something of a bias against artificial ordering in poetry appears to prevent Professor Anderson from taking this approach. Instead, she looks for echoes and parallels within the poems as her primary clue to significance, finding in these a self-conscious expression of the poet and a concern with the creative process itself.

In taking for granted that great poetry implies a freedom from pre-determined structure, she inevitably finds the later books of *The Faerie Queene* richer than the earlier. Cautiously sidestepping the question of the order in which Spenser composed the books of *The Faerie Queene*, she traces an evolutionary pattern from beginning to end, going beyond even Harry Berger's formulation to include the Mutability Cantos. And since the poet himself is submerged for the most part in his narrator, she has to rely largely upon presentation of character in order to show that as the personages of the poem become more conscious of themselves, so the poet "expresses a new self-awareness." Finally, just as Langland's Dreamer comes closer and closer to his own identity through the increasing "inwardness" of the characters whom he meets, so at last Spenser meets himself in the person of Colin Clout, who brings to full circle the "I" of the first stanza: "Lo! I the man, whose Muse whylome did maske,/As time her taught, in lowly shephards weeds..."

It is an attractive argument in that it makes sense of the movement away from schematic allegory after the first two books—books which Professor Anderson views as limited by Spenser's very assurance about what form they should take. We are told that the poet's position in the first books "is a source of profound strength but also of weakness" because they embody "pre-conceived answers." A romantic attitude surely, but to say that the natural mind is the untidy mind does beg the question. If the later books of *The Faerie Queene* are less tidy than the earlier, does this necessarily make them more valuable? We are told that if we possessed only the first two books of Spenser's poem, Langland's "might well appear the more basically searching poem, more genuinely about life than about systems." The word "life" chimes with Professor Anderson's fondness for organic metaphors such as "growth." Given this taste for the natural over the artificial, it is little wonder that she finds a kind of Darwinian progression from an Elizabethan sense of order to a more modern free form.

Yet paradoxically, as she notes, the first two books of *The Faerie Queene*, which are farthest from Langland in structure, are in fact closest in thought. No doubt Spenser was restating the morality of his literary ancestors in a form which would meet Renaissance standards of beauty. But if in the later books of *The Faerie Queene* he deviated from those standards, there is more than one possible explanation: he need not have deviated for the sake of greater freedom

or self-expression but—to repeat an old-fashioned argument—simply because he could not find a myth as adequate to the virtues of chastity, friendship, justice, and courtesy as he found for holiness and temperance. In other words, the problem might be rephrased as one of invention.

For a more realistic appraisal of Spenser's evolving self-awareness, one would have to take into account his need for myth, as well as his need for beauty. Both separate him radically from Langland, whose apocalyptic approach to the moral problems of human existence obviates the need for self-contained illusionistic fiction. Whereas the earlier poet presents a narrator who has to be enlightened through a series of visions, the later poet presents a narrator who already has the answers and who therefore shapes his story for his reader's benefit. It would be interesting to have a fuller discussion of just how Spenser transforms what he may have borrowed from Langland. If, for example, his *Piers of the October Eclogue* derives at all from Langland, it is significant that this *Piers* praises beauty as that "immortall mirrhor." The changes made by Spenser in his medieval sources are at least as worth considering as his dependence upon them. And of course aesthetic divergences between the two poets also imply moral ones.

In short, the difference of genre needs to be confronted more directly. This, however, is almost entirely precluded by the plan of this book. It proceeds so much by commentary, book by book of *The Faerie Queene* and passus by passus of *Piers Plowman*, that these parallel lines seem destined never to quite meet. In considering the question of whether these poems aspire to the condition of autobiography, it has to be recognized that they belong to that allegorical tradition in which the poet is the servant of a higher truth. Perhaps indeed the inspired poet may at last be allowed to speak in his own voice. The power of such an "I" is undeniable, for nothing but the poet's own authority can finally attest to the truth of his vision. But it is possible that this personal voice is the outcome of a genuine allegorical vision, as well as the most rhetorically effective way of presenting that vision. The theological argument in favor of "personality" seems to me a little out of place here, especially when it begins to sound suspiciously like the modern secular emphasis on the importance of self.

JUDITH DUNDAS

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The Harmonies of "The Merchant of Venice" by Lawrence Danson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. ix + 195. \$15.00.

This book presents a Christian reading of *The Merchant of Venice*. Without extending claims for a Christian reading of all Shakespeare, Danson believes that "in Shakespeare's defiantly 'impure' art, a parable may be complicated without being confused" (p. 70), and so Portia's treatment of Shylock is justified through what she teaches the audience: "In making sin appear as sin, God's law performs the crucial didactic function that Portia will make Venice's law perform, making

man aware of his inevitably sinful nature (since no man can perform all the works of law), and hence of his dependence upon God for salvation" (p. 77). Danson answers interpretations which may either be critical of the Christians or sympathetic to Shylock (no other choices are presented) by arguing from biblical allusion, the use of historical or literary context, or close reading. The interpretation is particularly critical of Shylock who is seen as leaping from brotherhood to barbarity in the "Hath not a Jew eyes" speech. When analyzing Shylock's behavior Danson neglects to mention Jessica's elopement as immediate motivation for Shylock's revenge, even though pages are devoted to Shylock's reaction to news of Leah's ring. His slightest lapse is held up to scrutiny while the Christians are defended *en masse*: "the outraged feeling that the poor man is intolerably wronged... has led to the creation of a tribe of heartless fops where one had expected the cast of a romantic comedy which celebrates harmony and love, human and divine" (p. 133).

The argument does not convince for several reasons. Its unevenness is demonstrated by the paragraph above: some important issues, actions, characters are virtually neglected while others are magnified out of proportion. The harmony it purports to demonstrate is assumed and therefore any element—Antonio's possible homosexuality or the cruelty of Gratiano—that threatens the harmony is rejected. Harmony is taken to mean: 1) the reconciliation of all issues raised; 2) the basic goodness of Christian characters; 3) the positive tone of a romantic comedy. Above all, the harmony of *The Merchant of Venice* will not admit, in Danson's reading, any irony. He says of Shylock's forced conversion: "On faith, as it were, let us here assume that Shakespeare intends no corruscating [sic] irony, but rather a demonstration of Antonio's increased harmonization, the amending in one gesture both of his own and, perforce, Shylock's spiritual state, in his response to Portia's question" (pp. 124-5). Such a leap of faith may be too great for many readers who, like this one, find perennial fascination in the complex interplay of irony with romance, moral and religious values with a vividly realized social fabric. In fact, the kind of harmony Danson calls for does not even admit the subtle even-handedness of the portraits of Christian and Jew, each with a claim of sympathy and each with human defect.

The book is intended for "the non-specialist student," and yet its decisions of emphases and explanation seem governed by the interests of specialists. Even so, one wonders what students these days will be satisfied to dismiss issues like Antonio's melancholy or Portia's hinting the choice of casket in "Tell me where is Fancy bred" simply because the questions raise more problems than they settle or they conflict with the play's harmony. One cannot fault Professor Danson for wishing to contribute to the continuing debate about one of Shakespeare's most intriguing plays, but his book is not informative enough for his intended audience and his contribution to the debate too special for a book-length study. We would have been better served by an article summarizing his argument addressed to his fellow Shakespeareans.

MARILYN WILLIAMSON

Wayne State University

Virginia Woolf: Sources of Madness and Art by Jean O. Love. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: Univ. of California Press, 1977. Pp. xiv + 379. \$14.95.

The psychological approach to literature is potentially fruitful, especially as it illuminates the creative process. Jean Love, in what is "the first of a two-part study of the more personal side of the artist's life," applies her expertise as a psychologist to certain issues in the life of Virginia Woolf which, in spite of the Quentin Bell biography, remain perplexing: Woolf's "so-called madness, her physical health difficulties, her atypical sexuality, and her preoccupation with death.... her characteristic patterns of thought and her obsessive need to write and to create... [and] the relationship between her madness and her art." Love depends heavily on the Bell biography, but she has drawn her theories and some of her applications of them from other literary, historical, and psychological studies. For her evidence, however, she prefers to rely on "personal documents," primarily memoirs, letters, and diaries. For the most part, she recognizes the complexities inherent in the use of such documents, mainly Woolf's tendencies to subject facts to various artistic transformations and to view persons and events in a fantastic or humorous light. Consequently, Love tries to check Woolf's representations against other sources and accounts, some of which, in turn, are not objective. Love also examines sources, like the letters from Leslie to Julia Stephen, to which Bell did not have access. She thus adds to our knowledge of the personalities of Woolf's father and mother the relationship between them, and the impact they had, separately and together, on their daughter. Love traces the contradictions in Leslie Stephen's personality to his own family background, to the relationship between his parents and to his relationship with them. Similarly, she accounts for Julia Stephen's personality by exploring her family background.

Love includes Woolf's novels among the "personal documents" from which she draws her evidence. That she should do so is not surprising since she has already published a book on them: *Worlds in Consciousness: Mythopoetic Thought in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* (1970). In this book, Love outlined the principles of developmental cognitive psychology, then applied them to Woolf's novels where she found a lack of differentiation and an absence of hierarchies among the parts of wholes, multiple meanings, as well as magic, animism, religion, and sorcery. The discussions of various novels in these terms are provocative, but occasionally one-sided. For example, Mrs. Ramsay's positive, unifying magic is only one aspect of Woolf's portrait of her, something Love recognizes in the more recent study. In this study, too, the procedure is more empirical. Love outlines the biographical evidence of which the novels are a carefully defined part, then introduces psychological theories when they are relevant and illuminating. Novels like *To the Lighthouse*, Love says, "cannot be treated as fact" but can be used to clarify information compiled from other sources." She is more willing to use the novels when they support the other evidence, however, than when they do not. When she wishes, for example, to establish Leslie Stephen as the "old wretch" who exhausted Julia completely, she acknowledges the security and sustenance Mrs. Ramsay derives from the "admirable fabric of masculine intelligence," but she adds that "these state-

ments pertain to a fictional character. The real woman, Virginia's mother, whatever her inclinations, was allowed to do very little leaning on her husband." Love is less ready, in other parts of her discussion, to remind us of the fictional nature of certain statements. The Stephen children, she says, "were forbidden to hope for anything unless firm evidence existed that they would get it, as Virginia indicated in *To the Lighthouse*." True, evidence from letters corroborates Leslie's preoccupation with facts. Still the question remains: To what degree is any detail in Woolf's fiction autobiographical? Love is wise to draw on the novels in only a supplemental way.

It is difficult to read the study and not see Leslie Stephen as the villain. In spite of Love's attempt in "The Ragamice" section to bring out his more positive traits and contributions to his children's lives, like his drawing and hiking, he remains a negative figure. Explanations of the causes of his destructive behavior do not mitigate the portrait of him as a confused and unhappy bundle of insecurities imperiously demanding continual affection and reassurance without ever being satisfied either with himself or with the love of others. Sections of Love's discussion of him are entitled, for example, "The Divided Man," "Getting What One Wants Without Asking," "Sulking Through Inevitabilities," and "Leslie at His Games." When we encounter a section entitled "Leslie the Protector," the tone is ironic.

The effects of the background Leslie and Julia Stephen created for their children, especially for Virginia Woolf, is Love's primary concern. Physical and mental illness and death were overwhelming presences in the family into which Woolf was born and in which she lived. Her fears for her own health and sanity as well as her preoccupation with the absurd frailty of human life preyed upon by chaotic and uncontrollable forces derives from this background and accounts for much of her instability. Among the other circumstances which affected Woolf were a lack of intimacy with her mother, a relationship between her parents in which the wife sacrificed to the often unreasonable demands of a husband who had temper tantrums, and the apparent sexual advances of one or both of her half-brothers. The results were Virginia's searches for substitute mothers and her demands for love and demonstrations of affection as well as fits of temper that paralleled her father's, her distrust of traditional marriages, and her attraction to women. Woolf's sexuality, Love decides, cannot be summed up in conventional terms. The best description of her is androgynous.

Against this background, Love attempts to define the relationship between the tendencies which led to madness and the tendencies which resulted in Woolf's art. Careful not to make any facile equation between madness and art, Love claims that, in Woolf's case, the two "emerged from a common ground, and although they were complexly inter-related, neither gave rise to the other." The scenes Woolf was able to create so vividly could, on the one hand, result in hallucinations or, on the other, vivid writing; the ability could be either uncontrolled or controlled. The merging of inner and outer states could result, on the one hand, in a loss of touch with reality or, on the other, in what literary critics have come to call the pathetic fallacy. Writing became Woolf's method of creating order and sanity in the face of chaos and madness

as well as an activity that gave her identity in the face of a weak sense of herself.

A pattern in Love's book is to raise questions about what has been said about Woolf's life and then, either to return to the accepted notions or to declare the matter inconclusive. Her treatment of the alleged sexual advances of George Duckworth is a case in point as is her consideration of the date of Woolf's first breakdown. Another pattern is to propose how things might have been if certain factors had not been present, then to shatter the illusion of free will with the determinism that pervades the book: "Given the personalities of her parents, they could not conduct themselves very differently than they did, and so the pathetic drama resulting in Julia's early death had to work itself out. And since Leslie was as he was, there was little likelihood that the mourning for Julia could have gone other than it did. After that, Virginia's personal disturbance was as irresistible as a force of nature." Love's book, which traces the lives of Virginia Woolf and her family through the years when she is writing her first novel, concludes with the observation that, in her life and her art, she "was never to escape her childhood completely." What these patterns in Love's discussion suggest is the complexity of the matter, the difficulty of describing discursively that which contains so many interrelated variables, shifting nuances, and seeming contradictions. In spite of a certain amount of repetition and ambiguity, Love, in the face of such difficulties, does a creditable job. Her book is a substantial response to the increasing wealth of biographical data about Virginia Woolf currently in print.

DIANE FILBY GILLESPIE

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Augustus Caesar in "Augustan" England: The Decline of a Classical Norm by
Howard D. Weinbrot. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp.
xi + 270. \$15.00.

Eighteenth-century studies suffer from a chronic problem of nomenclature, and Howard Weinbrot's new book is likely to induce a crisis in that regard. "Augustan" as the defining or even modifying adjective for the recalcitrant period that stretches intimidatingly from 1660 to 1800 (or it is 1798? or 1789? or 1815? or the death of Jane Austen?) will probably have to join such companions in inadequacy as the unlamented "pre-Romantic" and the more missed "neo-classical" (I still like it). One grows positively nostalgic for simplistic days, when we all knew that whatever the period was called, it was all just poetry of statement anyhow.

Augustus Caesar in "Augustan" England takes in a good deal of important territory, and it does so very well. Professor Weinbrot wisely revised his plans for a very broad study of the rejection of classical standards in this period to focus more acutely on the central figure of Augustus and his major satellites; he has produced a thoroughly researched and lucidly argued case for Augustus

as a negative norm—if any kind of norm at all—for the period we have named after him. Beginning with the classical historians and continuing through a wide selection of English and Continental “Augustan” documents, he has exposed a widespread political animus against Augustus as tyrant and usurper, destroyer of Roman liberties, hypocrite, murderer (of Cicero if no one else—thereby perhaps explaining the continuing regard for Augustus on the part of beginning students of Latin). This Augustus possesses a private life commensurate with his public: adulterer, debauché, etc. In England, this vision of Augustus seems to have been shared by both the Opposition and the Government, as Weinbrot amply demonstrates. Perhaps more surprising to scholars of literature, however, is Weinbrot’s revelation of an Augustus who is not the great patron of letters but their corruptor, an unscrupulous politician who in effect “bought” Horace and Virgil, killed Cicero—the last voice of the Republic, exiled Ovid, and rewrote history to his own liking. That fact shuffles a new card into the deck, one that is going to necessitate some serious rethinking about a good many aspects of late Seventeenth- and early Eighteenth-century literature as well as of a good number of individual works.

Weinbrot is fully aware that he is not describing a monolithic consciousness, and he gives the pro-Augustan elements of the period their fair share of his argument. It will not be his fault if the next spate of anthologies bears names like “The Anti-Augustan Age.” His argument is more balanced than that; he recognizes that there is an imprecise but valid use of the term “Augustan,” both in the Eighteenth century and in the Twentieth, to mean “nothing more than vague approbation of national strength, stable government, and support for the arts” (p. 51). Indeed, the very wealth of documentation that he can display for the anti-Augustan side of the proposition itself paradoxically points to the importance of the concept of Augustus and Augustanism in the period and restores a kind of negative correctness to the term he is discrediting.

On the literary side of the question, Weinbrot performs a valuable service particularly in emphasizing the importance of Juvenal as the uncorrupted voice of liberty and the kind of moral ascendancy he achieved, at least for some readers, over Horace because of Horace’s association with or corruption by Augustus. Here, of course, matters become much more equivocal since the artistic accomplishment of Horace and Virgil seems almost never to have been called in question, and the actual role of these poets or their poems in any given “Augustan” work will have to be determined *ad hoc* in each individual case. We’ve known for some time, for instance, about the presence of Juvenalian passages and Juvenalian tone in many of Pope’s Horatian imitations, but Weinbrot’s information gives a new perspective from which to evaluate them and the “norm” of Horace in those poems. I am struck, as an example, by the kind of connection Weinbrot’s information makes possible between the allusions to Persius and through him to Nero (Midas, Sporus) and the allusions to Ovid’s poems from exile in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*: Nero the tyrant and Augustus the tyrant who exiled Ovid merge into George the Augustan tyrant, corrupter and repressor of letters. If I am not convinced by Weinbrot’s assertion that in some major respects “Horace is the enemy” (p. 217) for Pope, it is only because the very wealth of material he has presented seems to me to indicate

a much more complex interrelation between the two poets than any of us has yet understood.

This is a solid and craftsmanly book; it should be read carefully and thoughtfully by every serious student of "Augustan" literature.

THOMAS E. MARESCA

State University of New York at Stony Brook

Carlyle and Emerson: Their Long Debate by Kenneth Marc Harris. Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. xii + 194. \$12.50.

The Slender Human Word: Emerson's Artistry in Prose by William J. Sheick. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1978. Pp. xiv + 162. \$9.00.

Both Emerson and Carlyle were enormously popular, and controversial, authors in their own time and each, with the coming of the twentieth century, suffered a serious decline in stature—Emerson for appearing to be a bland optimist, Carlyle for his reputation as a dyspeptic reactionary. For some time, however, scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have worked patiently to redeem these figures and rekindle interest in their work. In particular, as the centenary of Emerson's death approaches (1982), a new spurt of critical interest seems clearly in the making, at least in this country. Although Emerson has had some notable modern defenders (one thinks of F. O. Matthiessen, Stephen Whicher, Sherman Paul, Jonathan Bishop, Maurice Gonnard, and Harold Bloom), he still has lacked the following of a Whitman, say, or a Melville among both critics and readers. For many, Emerson's work, along with that of Carlyle "and dozens of other respectable writers," as T. S. Eliot noted in 1935, falls into the chilly category of "improving reading."

But now it appears that a new generation of scholars has rediscovered both Emerson and his formidable friend and feels confident that even non-specialists can be brought to share an enthusiasm for their literary skill and moral pertinence. As Kenneth Harris notes at the end of his study, Emerson and Carlyle can "help us to look at ourselves with compassion and understanding." And William Scheick, annoyed at hearing colleagues apologize for assigning Emerson in literature classes, insists that "we should no longer deny Emerson his proper place among the artists, even more than among the thinkers, of nineteenth-century America. His essays are prose poems, as rich and complex as any modern literary critic might demand."

Harris's essay is spirited and engaging and manages to cover what might seem familiar ground in a new way. Anyone who knows anything about the Emerson-Carlyle relationship will recall that they both published books on "great men," the titles of which (*Representative Men vs. Heroes and Hero-Worship*) sufficiently suggest, it seems, Emerson's egalitarian bias as opposed to Carlyle's elitist one. Harris, however, in a chapter entitled "Self-Denial and Self-Reliance," takes us behind such clichés to a more subtle dialectic. He

argues that the real difference between the two books is a question of biographical method rather than theory or choice of subject. Carlyle and Emerson, he notes, were men of ideas as well as men of letters, but they were never ideologues, and there is no reason to interpret their biographical and historical writings as illustrations of abstract concepts or theories, whether Transcendental or of some other variety. As biographers, they had a genuine interest in the people about whom they chose to write, and in their better work they displayed the knack of all skillful biographers to make their subjects come alive. Their philosophical ideas and attitudes acted as undercurrents, creating waves but rarely breaking the surface." Harris concludes this chapter with an original and thoughtful comparison of Carlyle's *Life of John Sterling* and Emerson's contribution to *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller*. The two other main chapters of this book, one setting *Nature* against *Sartor Resartus*, the other *Past and Present* against *English Traits*, are instructive exercises in comparative Transcendental metaphysics and politics; they also demonstrate at once how oddly similar and dissimilar were the careers and views of these writers.

Harris's judgments throughout are provocative, and I sometimes disagree with them. I do not believe that Anglo-American Transcendentalism can be said to have been unsuccessful in its attempt "to redefine the Christian soul" or that "Emerson did not share Carlyle's commitment to freedom of the will." Nor do I concur with Harris's view that in *The Conduct of Life* Emerson had not "extended or clarified his thinking, much less changed any of his ideas." Other readers may not agree with the notion that Carlyle loved "destruction for its own sake," although most will enjoy Harris's lively discussion of Carlyle's literary pyromania. And who will fail to applaud when Harris presents "that flower child of the nineteenth century, A. Bronson Alcott," brazenly telling the Scottish fire-eater, who was deeply immersed in the Puritan Revolution. "that instead of resurrecting Cromwell he was descending into the grave with him"?

William Scheick's study of Emerson's artistry focusses fundamentally on the intricate patterns of imagery that he finds uniting seemingly disparate essays. Scheick is sensitive to nuance of figure and language and has some especially illuminating things to say about such familiar pieces as "Self-Reliance," "Experience," and "Fate." Throughout his book, he tries to make a case for what he calls the "hieroglyph" as opposed to more conventional notions of symbol or image. According to the author, Emerson himself had an abiding interest in the "hieroglyph" as a "picture fusing material and spiritual realms, a figure or image visually communicating this secret symbolic relationship." Scheick instances Emerson's speaking, for example, "of Swedenborg's ability to read the world as 'a grammar of hieroglyphs.'" Now immediately a problem presents itself, it seems to me, for if we in fact turn to the passage in "Swedenborg, Or, the Mystic," from which Scheick is quoting we notice that Emerson is actually taking Swedenborg to task: "The warm, many-weathered, passionate-peopled world is to him a grammar of hieroglyphs, or an emblematic freemason's procession." Emerson attacks Swedenborg for claiming that every symbol has one secret meaning which he alone is competent to disclose. "The slippery Proteus is not so easily caught," Emerson insists, for "in nature, each individual symbol plays innumerable parts." I am therefore quite baffled when Scheick

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writes that, for Emerson, the hieroglyph "does not denote an arbitrary significance attributed to a symbol or emblem by a particular artist; rather it implies an intrinsic universal sign-value, a hidden self-explanatory moral or allegory, which the true artist intuits." This is precisely the view that Emerson assails. And, indeed, Scheick goes on to cite Emerson on the Poet as follows: "He makes the outward creation subordinate and merely a convenient alphabet to express thoughts and emotions." All this amounts to a considerable muddle, it seems to me, for Emerson is concerned with a theory of poetic metaphor-making and not with the unravelling of a mystical system of signs—that "emblematic freemason's procession" which he rejects in the Swedenborg essay. Fortunately, the author goes on to fudge his own distinction and writes of an essay being organized "around a central hieroglyph and coalescing imagery in relation to this governing image." We are thus left with more or less traditional discussions of image clusters, particularly as these images arise from or are reinforced by Emerson's interest in the root, or primitive, meanings of words.

This is all to the good and frequently leads to useful criticism. But some of Scheick's etymological exercises are dismaying. For example, he quotes Emerson on the great man's using the "planet for his pedestal" and then comments: "as the Latin *ped* (foot) suggests, once we follow the lines of rich relations which the great man has mapped for us, we 'shall never again be quite the miserable pedants we were.'" The two roots, *pes* and *pais* (child), are unfortunately quite distinct, so the alignment suggested here collapses. Again, Scheick cites Emerson's remark that "light, unsystematic, indomitable, will break into any cabin," and then leads us into a discussion about light being "indeed 'indomitable'—uncontainable (*domitare*) and un-dome-able (*domus*, house)." This is ingenious but wrong. *Domitare* means not "to contain" but "to tame"; it is not cognate with *domus*; and "indomitable" has nothing to do with houses. (Even if Scheick's etymology were correct, it is hard to see how Emerson's "pun" would work except according to the paradoxical principle of *lucus a non lucendo*.) In another place the author perplexingly derives *verdict* from "*versus + dictum*" (*verus* undoubtedly was meant). Nor is it right to say that *zodiac* "means *circle*"—though it does certainly imply one. And Emerson's remark that "every trivial fact . . . revisits the day, and delights all men," is surprisingly glossed as "this fact gives light (delights)." My students would greet that, I fear, with a resounding hiss.

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JOEL PORTE

Hermann Hesse: Biography and Bibliography by Joseph Mileck. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Pp. vol. I: 806, vol. II: 628. \$57.50, the set.

The work that went into producing these volumes staggers the mind. Mileck himself says that the project became an obsession, which is probably the only way it could have been done. Fourteen years in the making and costing thousands, it is a colossal repertorium of everything Hesse wrote—published or not—

organized by a meaningful system of classification with name and title indices. Everything we wanted to know about Hesse but did not know where to look is here. An all-encompassing bibliography of this kind is possible only after an author's *Nachlass* has become available. This work therefore makes unnecessary any more searching of the past.

The bibliography itself is divided into twelve categories. Mileck is his own best summarizer: "Parts I to III deal with the various editions of Hesse's collected works, his books and pamphlets, and his private publications. Part IV is an omnium-gatherum of published prose. Part V treats poetry, proceeding from major and minor publications to manuscript collections, to individual poems both published and unpublished, and to an index of titles. Parts VI and VII are given to reviews and editorial work, Part VIII includes the published and unpublished letters of both Hesse and his correspondents, Part IX draws attention to the widespread translation of Hesse's works and Part X focuses upon his manuscripts. Part XI appends a miscellany of recordings, texts for the blind, and inclusions in textbooks for English-speaking students of German. Part XII is a bibliography of books, pamphlets, and dissertations about Hesse" (*Preface*, xiv). For each item, Mileck gives a history of publication that takes a work through its genesis, revisions, title changes, including dates of composition, submission, and publication. This bibliography is the kind of indispensable reference work necessary for serious scholarship. It also has another function: it can serve as "the basis for a critical historical tradition of Hesse's works" (*Preface*, xiv) for which there is a great need.

The seventy-five thousand word introduction "Life and Works" is a biographical-bibliographical odyssey through Hesse's life which Mileck divides into eight periods: Calw 1877-1895, Tübingen 1895-1899, Basel 1899-1904, Gaienhofen 1904-12, Bern 1912-1919, and Montagnola 1919-1931, 1931-1945, 1945-1962. Each section follows the same structural principle: a relevant account of Hesse's surface life, of his artistic-spiritual development, of his publications, and of his changing fortunes with the public. Above all, the reader is struck by how much Hesse's personal life figures into what he writes.

Hesse the man emerges from Mileck's pages as a neurotic of massive proportions. He was a man whose inner equilibrium was ruined by a suffocating, religious education. Like any religion, Pietism is crystallized around a particular moral-religious myth. It accepts some of man's primal drives while others are declared of the Devil and are suppressed. Pietistic values became Hesse's second, and worse, nature because he grew up denying a good fifty percent of what it is to be human. A precocious child was turned into a tortured misfit incapable of accepting himself, mankind, or the world for the imperfect realities they are (I, 80). Hesse knew that he was living a lie, despised himself for it, struggled to break free, and hated himself for failing. However viciously he attacked the deficiencies of his age, he always put himself on the rack first, reviling and torturing himself in the most savage outbursts of self loathing. Solitary, difficult to get along with, and self preoccupied, he sought the therapy of self knowledge through literary self analysis. Consequently, his crippled personality floats through his works like an unpleasant aroma, particularly in the novels after World War I. Emil Sinclair's agonizing quest, Siddhartha's soul

sickness, Harry Haller's appalling isolation and self contempt, his suicidal tendencies, and finally his orphic descent into the city's throbbing night life all have their real life counterparts. Hesse and his work are like two mirrors set facing each other, one a symbolical-mythological reflection of the other. This close relationship between the artist and his work brings up a point of literary criticism.

Ever since Flaubert, James, and Eliot proclaimed the theory of *impersonalité*, two generations of writers and critics have been saying that we must not confuse the work with the man or the man with the work. Artists write impersonally. Even though the man may be imperfect, what he creates is pure; it is uninfected by his personal feelings, his rages, and his torments. When a piece of art leaves the writer's pen, it becomes an impersonal artifact independent of the author, the reader, and the critic. It has a life of its own. Hence, the writer's personality is irrelevant for comprehension. The meaning is inherent in the work and we do not need biography to get at it.

A more recent view has it that the writer and his art are one. The author does write with his rages and passions, his deficiencies and fantasies. Art grows out of the man and it expresses what he is as a biologically and sociologically conditioned person. Writers do not create impersonally and critics do not read impersonally. *Impersonalite* is simply a ready-made, banal theory which relieves the critic of the responsibility of thinking through the complex relationship between the man and his work.

Mileck does not enter this debate. Yet from reading his book, it is clear that our understanding of Hesse's art cannot be complete until we think through the relationship between them. Mileck's contribution makes not only this possible but virtually every other kind of research as well.

JOHN D. SIMONS

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What Will Have Happened: A Philosophical and Technical Essay on Mystery Stories by Robert Champigny. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1977. Pp. 183.

Anatomy of the Spy Thriller by Bruce Merry. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977. Pp. 253.

Until fairly recently, the analysis and criticism of popular narrative genres like the detective story or the spy thriller was largely in the hands of fans, collectors, and practitioners. Or these genres served as data for anatomization of mass tastes, ideologies and mythologies. The two books before us however, are attempts by professional academics to use the methods of literary and philosophical analysis to explain the detective story and the spy thriller by defining their structures, their artistic characteristics, and their most basic meanings. These are, in effect, "poetics" of these genres, proposing to do for the detective story and the spy story what Aristotle once did for tragedy. While neither

of these two works will ever dominate its respective field in the fashion of Aristotle's treatise, each makes a useful contribution and raises interesting questions about the definition and interpretation of popular narrative genres.

Prof. Champigny insists, first of all, that the mystery story is a perfectly legitimate form of narrative art, as capable of esthetic achievement as any other kind of story. He sees "nothing wrong with the mystery genre itself" (5) because, in his view, the mystery story is, like all other forms of narrative art, a "ludic-esthetic" activity. Therefore, the mystery story can serve not only as a focus of enjoyment in its own right, but as a form which provides "revealing tests of narrative logic and art" (15). In his analysis, Prof. Champigny attempts to define the distinctive characteristics of the mystery form and to differentiate it from other kinds of narrative art.

As he sees it, the mystery story is fundamentally a "hermeneutic tale," meaning that "the goal and result of the narrated process is the determination of some events anterior to the ending of the process" (13). From this axiom, Champigny attempts to define the distinctive characteristics of the mystery form and views as particularly central to the mystery story. In his first section, he deals with the special requirements of hermeneutic tales in regard to such problems of narrative construction as the creation of fictional character and event, the establishment of a sense of probability and necessity, and the treatment of morality and justice in a story which deals with crime and its investigation. He argues, for example, that because the goal of the hermeneutic tale is a precise determination of "what will have happened," questions of motive and thus of characterization are ancillary rather than central to the form. This constitutes one of the key differences between a hermeneutic tale and a "straight story." Perhaps Champigny's most valuable contribution in this section is his emphasis on the idea that the construction of a mystery is an esthetic rather than a conceptual or moral matter. In other words, it is not the inevitable logic of its argument that makes a mystery work, but the author's skill in using stylistic and structural devices to create conviction in the solution he, in the end, espouses. Similarly, that the mystery story usually, though not always, ends in the apprehension of a criminal is not, in Champigny's view a moral statement. Instead, "what a murder story can do . . . is to use departures from socioreligious imperatives and the substitution of esthetic justice for legal justice in such a way as to raise moral questions implicitly, instead of spiriting them away" (51). Though this seems a valid and useful emphasis in the consideration of mystery stories, unfortunately, Champigny does not develop his concept of esthetic justice and esthetic logic fully enough for this reader to be quite sure of what he really means.

The second part of Champigny's book is, in my opinion, the clearest and most useful. In this section he takes up the mystery story's way of handling such literary elements as plot sequence, viewpoint, and atmosphere. In particular, his discussion of viewpoint effectively bears out his general contention that the mystery story is a distinctive and esthetically respectable genre with its own complex and fascinating esthetic problems to be solved. The necessity of concealment and misdirection in the major part of the narrative makes the creation and sustaining of a narrative viewpoint a peculiarly difficult problem in the genre

and Champigny does an excellent job in analysing how both successful and unsuccessful texts have dealt with this challenge.

On the whole, *What Will Have Happened* is valuable for its general emphasis on the esthetic dimension of the mystery genre and for the many particular insights it offers into the process of mystery construction. But most readers will find the book very tough going because of the opacity of its narrative style, and its excessive deployment of philosophical jargon. Here is a not untypical example: "The ideal identity between cognitive induction and analytic deduction that a ratiocinative tale may project involves pseudoanalyticity as well as pseudo-cognitivity" (35). I suppose one might eventually learn to swallow that mouthful, but all too often such dense clots of polysyllables turn out on unpacking to be rather obvious notions that conceal their simplicity in a flood of terminological mystification. I think the above statement means only that the appearance of logic in the detective's reasoning from clues often turns out on closer examination to be highly contrived.

Bruce Merry's *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller* is a far more lucid and engagingly written study than *What Will Have Happened*. Consequently, it should prove more useful to most readers than Champigny's study. Like Champigny, Merry insists on viewing his genre as a fundamentally esthetic problem. He insists that the portrayal of espionage in the thriller has little to do with the actual practices of intelligence agencies and offers many examples of the difference between thriller conventions and actual espionage practices. Instead, Merry argues that the thriller is essentially a modern version of the epic and attempts to substantiate this thesis by giving many instances of parallels between Homeric and other traditional epics and the contemporary spy thriller. As he sees it, the thriller takes its shape from the adaptation of traditional literary conventions. Its structure and appeal are to be understood primarily in terms of these conventions.

The main body of Merry's work then, consists of commentary on the basic spy thriller structures and conventions. This discussion is excellent, albeit rather too rambling and unsystematic in exposition. A tighter organization would have saved a good deal of unnecessary repetition and made the *Anatomy* easier to use. Nonetheless, by the time he is finished, Merry has effectively defined most of the standard structural devices and conventions of the spy thriller and shown how they function esthetically. One of his key ideas is that "a well-made spy thriller aims at the elusive quality of 'unputdownability.' It wants to be read all at once, or at a minimum of sittings" (49). With a detailed analysis of Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*, which he considers as "the model example of the genre" (59), Merry shows how certain distinctive thriller structures work together to create this quality. One of these devices is what he calls "global simultaneity" or the concurrent development of several plot lines at different geographical locations. Of course, this is nothing but the old "meanwhile back at the fort" or narrative cross-cutting device which has long been a staple of suspenseful adventure stories, but Merry shows how a skillful spy thriller writer like Forsyth can intensify both the suspense and the sense of significance in his story by shaping widely scattered locations and plotlines toward a climactic confrontation between protagonist and

antagonist in a single place. Merry also describes another important structural device used with great effectiveness by Forsyth. *The Day of the Jackal* is constructed in such a way that as the book proceeds, the pace of the narrative intensifies with more material covered in fewer pages. Thus, "the reader is obliged to accelerate his speed of consumption, since action and information is packed into less and less space as the story progresses to its climax" (50).

Anatomy of the Spy Thriller offers many interesting and valid observations about the distinctive narrative structures characteristic of the genre as well as discussions of its stereotypical character roles and episodes. In addition Merry attempts to differentiate between different subgenres of the spy thriller. He offers some interesting, though oversimplified observations on the difference between British and American versions of the thriller and he also attempts to describe the salient characteristics of spy thrillers of what he calls the first and second generations, i. e., the pre- and post-World War II eras. This, also is too broad a characterization, for there are at least four major phases in the history of the spy story: the work of Le Queux, Buchan, Rohmer, Yates, *et al.*, in the years just before and after World War I; the writings of Ambler, Greene and others in the 1930s and 1940s; the romantic revival of Fleming and his imitators in the 1950s; and the anti-heroic spy thriller of Deighton and LeCarre of more recent times. Though he lacks a clear picture of the genre's evolution, Merry does give some useful insights into these different variations on the thriller.

From a theoretical point of view, Merry's book has many of the same strengths and weaknesses as Champigny's *What Will Have Happened*. Both attempt to deal with their genres as esthetic constructions and to define the primary structural problems faced by writers in these genres. Both apparently believe that because of the esthetic character of their genres they are as capable of producing good art as any other genre. As Champigny insists there is nothing inherently deficient about the hermeneutic tale so Merry asserts that "it takes skill and ability to compose a good thriller and there is clearly no inherent reason why a book about Intelligence work should stand less chance of gaining its writer a literary prize than a book about prison camps" (158). Insofar as this perspective stands as a corrective to the view that popular narrative genres are totally lacking in esthetic significance, these two books make a valuable contribution, showing us that the mystery story and the spy thriller can be seen to have their own distinctive poetics. However, it also seems to me that these two books are false to the nature of popular genres by treating them as if they were universal generic categories, such as tragedy or comedy or romance. It is true, I think, that mystery and adventure constitute universal, or at least transcultural, archetypes, but such particular versions of these archetypes as the spy thriller or the various types of detective story are cultural genres. Their meaning and their artfulness derive not only from universal structural principles, but from the rich complex of cultural meanings which they embody. If we are to understand both the appeal and the artistic possibilities inherent in these popular genres, we must also understand the cultural meanings that they carry. Merry is, I think, only partly right when he says that the spy thriller is a contemporary form of the Homeric epic. Actually, there are parallels

between these literary forms because both partake to some extent of the archetypal patterns of adventure. To this extent, it makes sense to treat *Goldfinger* and the *Iliad* in the same terms, but only to this extent. To deal more complexly with the art of the mystery story or the spy thriller, we must also ask why it is that the detective and the spy have become such important contemporary embodiments of the archetypes of mystery and adventure, and what are the artistic implications of these contemporary cultural symbolizations. Unfortunately, neither *What Will Have Happened* nor *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller* adds much to our understanding of these problems.

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Nature and the Victorian Imagination edited by U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. Pp. xxiii + 519. \$25.00.

This beautifully edited and produced book is clearly a model for interdisciplinary thematic collections. The editors have chosen a suitably broad but limitable topic, gathered a set of remarkably fine new essays to examine it, and provided a richness of pictorial support. Naturally not all of the essays will appeal to all readers equally. Here are some of my favorites as a sampling. Ellen E. Frank's "The Domestication of Nature: Five Houses in the Lake District" shows how "Victorians contrive to have Nature, however distant, real but no longer threatening." Chauncey C. Loomis' "The Arctic Sublime" is an intriguing study of the Victorian fascination with arctic exploration. Bruce Johnson's "'The Perfection of Species' and Hardy's *Tess*" is a well-argued original reading of Hardy's tantalizing fictional creation. Martin Meisel's "'Half Sick of Shadows': The Aesthetic Dialogue in Pre-Raphaelite Painting" offers detailed help in understanding individual PRB paintings and the role of nature in the PRB aesthetic. George Landow's "The Rainbow: A Problematic Image" is a splendidly thorough examination of an important literary and pictorial image.

The many other essays—twenty-four in all—are equally rewarding, from George H. Ford's fine examination of the cottage motif and what it signified in Victorian literature, to David B. Wilson's account of the secularization of Victorian thinking about physical nature, to Frederick Kirchoff's illuminating study of Ruskin's "floral mythology." The essays cover many areas, including the arts, history, and the sciences and are organized into sections such as "The Taming of Space," "Explorations," and "Systems of Knowledge" which help the reader to find a coherent relationship in the collection, as does the considerate system of cross-referencing.

This book sets a standard in many ways (even the printing, photographic reproduction, and proof-reading are superb). Let us hope that others will have the courage and patience to imitate this achievement.

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The Tragic Vision of Joyce Carol Oates by Mary Kathryn Grant, R. S. M. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1978. Pp. 167. \$9.75.

As a critic Joyce Carol Oates has written extensively about forms of tragedy. In this first book-length study of her work, Mary Kathryn Grant, R. S. M. focuses on the tragic vision which informs Oates's imaginative works, isolating especially the loss of community in the "diminished urban world" and the centrality of violence. Documenting convincingly the devastating intensity and ubiquity of violence—both physical and rhetorical—in Oates's fictive world, Grant finds that it grows out of a sense of personal impotence and powerlessness and that, unlike the often redemptive violence in the works of Flannery O'Connor, violence in Oates is destructive and unliberating. Catharsis is withheld in Oates's tragic vision. Grant is hard-pressed to find some shred of affirmation to support Oates's extra-literary insistence upon the redemptive potential of human beings: "her art to date seemingly places undue weight on merely getting through, enduring the struggle of human existence."

This study offers perceptive observations about facets of Oates's work, but its conceptual design restricts Grant to piecemeal analysis. No novel, story, or poem is treated as an aesthetic whole; rather, images, characters, and ideas are abstracted out of various works as illustrations of Grant's thesis. As she moves back and forth among the works, Grant not only places great demands on the reader (especially since volume citations are often not given) but she also denies fair consideration to what Oates calls the "hypotheses about human experience" proposed in each of her works. I do not think that violence is always unliberating in Oates's world, nor are her characters always trapped and incapable of transcendence. This study does not, in my opinion, give sufficient attention to the visionary possibilities implicit in some of Oates's fictional constructs. But then it was apparently written before the publication of more recent works (*Crossing the Border*, *The Assassins*, *Childwold*, and *Night-Side*) where Oates's visionary turn is more pronounced.

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