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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

*Subjective Criticism* by David Bleich. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. Pp. 309. \$16.00.

Subjective Criticism, the approach to the literary experience that gives priority to the reader as the maker of literary meanings and values, has been steadily gaining currency in recent years, as traditional interpretive practices have appeared to lose their authority, and their practitioners some of their confidence. This mid-life crisis of the humanities, a crisis of flagging energies and declining enrollments, may be no better reflected than in the widespread stratagems of beleaguered academics to pep up their work by adopting revolutionary programs of research and analysis and declaring prior modes of study obsolete, even when, as is sometimes the case, the turnover in interpretations is so rapid that what is being discarded has scarcely even been heard of. Subjective Criticism is just one of many such stratagems and by no means the latest, and as promoted by David Bleich it has all the earmarks of the average interpretive revolution, freely announcing the bankruptcy of all received literary knowledge and even challenging the notion that worthwhile knowledge can be received at all. In Bleich's rendering, Subjective Criticism asks the critic to make a new start, to cast off the threadbare lendings of graduate school (usually a coat and tie), break the hammerlock of the exhaustive bibliography, and vanquish the authority of the past. It urges him to be born again.

That is no mean appeal nowadays; there is fun and occasional profit in rebirth, even where the accrued benefits add up to little more than a fresh approach to literature and a new audience for one's work—in this case departments of Education in search of new ways to dispel the doldrums of the classroom. For what Subjective Criticism offers as a day to day bonus to the teacher is a regime of classroom exercises designed to enliven discussion by unlocking the personal meaning of the literary experience, encouraging students and professors alike to pool their responses to the text and, as Bleich puts it, to negotiate a communal interpretation. All reports back from the Subjective classroom, at least from the teachers, would appear to be positive. It sounds like a lively place.

But David Bleich's book, *Subjective Criticism*, is anything but a book about the formation of interpretive communities through the pooling and negotiation of responses, for Bleich is stalking bigger game than the over-controlled classroom or the over-prepared lecture. In a series of breathtaking assertions about origins and transmission of learning, Bleich issues a challenge to nothing less than the whole tradition of rational empiricism upon which Western science is founded, and which even constitutes, as Bleich believes, the prevailing rules of cultural knowledge. The villain in Bleich's view of modern education—and he makes no bones about its villainy—is "objective" knowledge and its repressive con-

nection to established religious authority. Bleich is quite serious about this. Citing Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as his authority, Bleich holds current notions of "objectivity" that sustain modern scientific inquiry to be nothing more than disposable paradigms of experience that just happen to be around because they suit our current emotional needs and present levels of cultural development, or used to, at any rate, since objectivity is fast being discredited. In a word, Western culture has clung so tenaciously to the "objective" mode of inquiry because it has proven to be, until now, "adaptive." This objectivity has also been, in Bleich's view, hierarchical and coercive because institutionally bound up with religion. The origins of objectivity lie in religion and not, as some of us had mistakenly thought, in a renegade movement of secular empiricism that had gained currency during the Renaissance. As evidence of this collusion Bleich cites the community censorship hearing in which "objective" authorities in the field of literature play along with local priests and bigots in the suppression of dangerous books and threatening ideas.

Bleich bears down hard on this point, that "objectivity" (he never refers to rationalism or empiricism) is the instrument of religious authority, and he is quite prepared to call both science and religion to account as mutually reinforcing superstitions. Objectivity and moral authority, he insists, are in cahoots, though what modern science ever did for religion besides cooperate in the suppression of pornography he is not prepared to say. But, as he puts it, "The 'laws' of nature and God have the same origin and purpose as laws issued by kings or enacted by legislatures—to provide a stable framework for social functioning." *Subjective Criticism*, going far afield, unmasks the laws of nature as ideology, as organized epistemological fraud in the service of social harmony and special interests: the new clergy of science. Once this accusation is out, we can see where we're headed, for Bleich's revolutionism is nothing if not thoroughgoing: *Subjective Criticism* is a manifesto for the liberation of man from hard data.

This assault upon traditional science is crucial to Bleich because he holds science, or at least the public image of science as a body of universal laws based on irrefutable facts, responsible for the distortions of literary intelligence that crept into the classroom with I. A. Richards and the New Criticism, which he charges with being a surrender to "objectivism," turning the literary text into a definable object, whose internal laws and external circumstances can be pinned down and exhausted by modern techniques of analysis. Bleich's method of debunking "objectivity" is to turn the tables on such science by invoking the perspectivism of modern science, especially Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which holds that the observer interferes with what is observed, introducing an element of uncertainty into his calculations, and Einstein's Relativity, which demonstrates that the positions, velocities, and masses of objects in relative motion, and even the flow of time, are illusions of viewpoint. This new science, Bleich tells us, conforms to the "subjective paradigm" by which we have now learned to experience life, and if subjectivity can so infiltrate the hardest core of the hard sciences, physics, what then can we say of the study of literature which has always been suspect of harboring subjective elements?

Thus, "To make a distinction between the interpretive and quantitative sciences for the purpose of assigning more or less authority to one of them is no longer possible, and the subjective paradigm suggests that knowledge in general comes from synthesized interpretations."

Under Bleich's version of the subject paradigm, small group processes and small group rationality are now the *sine qua non* of knowledge, and "if the community finds the explanation satisfactory for its own purposes, this alone is enough to render it adequate." Even mathematics, which we had supposed immune to cultural bias and social pressure, comes into focus as a group symbolization, subject to the needs and motives of the group: "When scientific explanation follows from the acceptance of a paradigm, this paradigm is constituted by a communal motive; mathematical formalism is an instrument of this motive. Mathematical systems resymbolize those experiences which the original belief in the paradigm has deemed 'presently adaptive to understand.'"

This idea that prevailing knowledge or paradigms of experience are merely adaptive conveniences has a vaguely Marxist ring to it, but one looks in vain for the systematic critique of "objectivity" and its relation to special interests that one usually finds in the Marxist analysis. For Bleich is no Marxist; he is far too suspicious of the very notion of reality to entertain a line of inquiry that stresses material conditions and forces. His subjective paradigm shares with Marxism only its rage against things as they are and the repressive authority that has a stake in them. That is, substituting "objectivity" for capitalism, Subjective Criticism shares with Marxism its rebellious myths but not its analytic methods, including its scrupulous attention to the "fact."

Indeed, Bleich's sweeping indictments of rational empiricism lead him into ridiculous positions, and his attempts to recruit post-relativistic science to the cause of the subjective paradigm are an insult to the intelligence. What could be more at variance with Bleich's "communal sufficiency" of knowledge or the idea that theories of reality are "motivated resymbolizations" than Relativity or Uncertainty which are, after all, rule-bound phenomena, predicted by theoretical considerations and confirmed by observations. Relativity theory, as Bleich knows well, offers precise rules by which the dilations of time and the increments of mass that affect a body moving at nearly the speed of light may be calculated, and the perspectivism that such calculations introduce into science is of a far different order than the "subjective paradigm" Bleich wants to promote as a norm of reading. Nor was there anything particularly subjective about the way the Newtonian universe was replaced by the Relativistic. Both Relativities, Special and General, gained acceptance by their capacity to explain known observations and predict new ones, and their ability to withstand the challenges of reason and evidence. They are not negotiated intersubjectivities let alone projected, symbolized motives. And while Bleich claims, through most of the book, to be following Thomas Kuhn in his insistence that knowledge is governed by paradigms, he also acknowledges his departure from Kuhn over the issue of empiricism, which Kuhn is not prepared to discard.

One would never guess from reading Bleich that scientists constitute international communities, and that the rules of evidence and canons of reason that obtain among physicists in Huntsville or Kharkov or Lop Nor are remarkably

consistent, and that scientists in such places are apt to share similar views on the rest mass of the Lambda Plus particle or the rate of expansion of the Atlantic sea floor that owe nothing to Bleich's cherished schemes of subjectivity. Bleich is ignorant of how scientific hypotheses are made and verified because he does not care about such matters; he cares only about the rhetoric of revolutionary purpose that can be appropriated from theorists such as Kuhn and Roger Poole, and cavalierly dismisses any counter-proposals that science really might test reality as evidence of its deep connection with religion, a revelation of its patrimony of authority and superstition.

Of course, Bleich's style of playing fast and loose with science does not of itself invalidate his propositions about the subjectivity of the reading experiences, but it does reveal the book as a whole to be fundamentally a piece of mythmaking in which the subjective elements in reading, rather than being topics to be examined in all curiosity, are treated as principles of heroic resistance to be defended. Learning how the mind works is less to the point than freeing oneself from the dead hand of the past. Thus the distortions of science that follow from the book's ideology are, if anything, redoubled in Bleich's depiction of the New Criticism, whose "objectivity," with its myths of the objective text and its need for a hierarchy—really a hierophancy—of interpreters, priests of the imagination, has inhibited the free play of critical inquiry. Granting the element of truth in this—the well-known stringencies in the New Criticism that are everywhere acknowledged—one would still never guess from Bleich's tone that the New Criticism could have produced a William Empson or a *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, a book all about the hazards of categorical interpretation, or that concepts such as ambiguity, tension, paradox, and conflict lay at the very heart of certain New Critical vocabularies. For indeed, when you've enclosed yourself in a revolutionary myth that has to be defended at all costs, contradictory evidence threatens to blow the whole system sky-high, and how better to defend one's personal investment in illusion than to announce the advent of mythic thinking itself—that henceforth subjectivity shall reign, starting with one's own?

That is especially unfortunate because we have just begun to think about the dynamics of the classroom and how interpretation actually takes place. Subjective Criticism, informed as it is by psychoanalysis, would seem to offer one promising approach to some questions about the personal dimensions of interpretation. But first it has to be purged of its own heroic and self-aggrandizing mythologies, especially the parricidal myth of the repressiveness of all prior knowledge, which effectively cuts it off from the rich reserves of both science and literary criticism that it needs to carry out its task with any sophistication.

MARK SHECHNER

*State University of New York-Buffalo*

*Psychoanalysis, Creativity, and Literature: A French-American Inquiry*, edited by Alan Roland. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. Pp. viii + 368. \$20.00.

Like the course of true love, the history of psychoanalysis never has run smooth. Neither, as a consequence, has the history of the relation between psychoanalysis and literary studies. The history of psychoanalysis could be narrated in its own language of development and defense: progressions involve regressions, positions so controversial at one time they lead to schisms re-surface later to claim ideological dominance by a kind of unacknowledged displacement of earlier stands. Controversies in theory become linked to idealized individual, group and national identities, so that they seem at once provincial and radically consequential. Yet, as in individual developments, a new sophistication may rather suddenly integrate what seemed permanently dis-unified, at least from one perspective. Any history of psychoanalysis must take into account the self-reflexive overdetermination of this artful science, the ways in which it is, like Shakespeare in Sonnet 111, "subdu'd/To what it works in, like the Dyers hand."

The identity of psychoanalysis is a psychoanalytic question which could be asked through *Psychoanalysis, Creativity and Literature*. This book collects seventeen essays that span a spectrum of styles of theoretical and applied psychoanalysis so broad that I can imagine a "decomposition" course based on it. Although billed as a "Franco-American Dialogue," the volume contains precious little actual dialogue among its various loosely gathered parts. It is more like the "corps morcelé" imagined by Jacques Lacan to portray the child not yet in possession of an image of its unity. Some essays seem to be transcripts of talks delivered at the 1976 symposia of which this book is the monument. Others seem (and some *are*) revised versions of work published elsewhere. Still others are fully polished work, clearly considered by the authors to be important "position" papers. But, to change the metaphor, the volume as a whole seems a Tower of Babel, not only because it gathers conceptual languages and ideological commitments from North America and the Continent, but because its many voices speak with too uneven degrees of articulated mastery of their chosen material, and the editorial work has been minimal. In the Biblical story God scattered the builders of Babel because they aspired to heaven. Here the process seems simply reversed: an international colloquy in which the speakers of different languages are merely collected, without enough of the deeper translation that could show their complex inter-relations.

But in fairness to Roland and his contributors, I should say that they move us closer to the possibility of this "deeper translation." The collection is also called an "inquiry," and even in the absence of adequate introductory integration of its contents, the contents themselves can be seen as a representative field of concepts and questions. To this extent, the volume offers something of an antidote to the pessimistic summary of our contemporary situation spoken by J. B. Pontalis: "...closed lingos that no longer refer to anything but themselves: there is an exchange, but only with another which is the same as oneself—prevalence of endogamy." At least in the past, "inquiries" did lead to more intimate, exogamous arrangements.

The volume as a whole represents the fields of theoretical and applied psychoanalysis in a process of metamorphic change which belies schematic description. Certainly no simple idea of "scientific progress" can be claimed to comprehend the entire process, although the rhetoric of scientific discovery and development does characterize some essays. The "American" authors, unsurprisingly, stay closer to applied science objectifications of their interpretive activity than the "French." Thus Norman Holland represents identity theory—the general idea that we re-create some central theme of our being in all our interactions, literary or not—as a "third phase" of psychoanalysis, superceding the dualities of conscious vs. unconscious and ego vs. non-ego, the very dualities that govern other essays in the volume. Ernest S. Wolf uses Sartre's and Kafka's fictions to illustrate the new theory of narcissism developed by Heinz Kohut. Albert Rothenberg claims to have discovered the structure of creative thinking by empirical means. Hereafter, Janusian and Homospacial thinking, concepts arrived at through "research observations" and "controlled experiments" can replace such noble precursors as Yin and Yang, Dionysian and Apollonian. These "Americans" (and others could be added) are eager for priority, for the mastery that derives from new theoretical technology, even when they are aware, as Holland surely is, that their theoretical positions extrapolate their own identities, or, as Wolf is, that their "newness" re-states a relation between empathy and "objectivity" as old as psychoanalysis.

There is, however, no uniformity among the "Americans." We even have a marginally psychoanalytic piece by Kenneth Burke, who is *sui generis*. The Rankian and Eriksonian contributions have a closer affinity with religious wishes for wholeness and devotion than with the styles of their more positivist companions. Thus Margaret Brenman-Gibson can interpret Clifford Odets' painful fantasy of being eaten by his audience as "integrating the contraries, including feminine and masculine identity elements." Such Eriksonian idealization allies her contribution with that of Roland and Rizzo, who adopt the language of "meaningful relations" and "self-realization" in their search for Pirandello. What these "Americans" lack, it seems to me, is the self-conscious irony that enlivens some of the "French," the irony that would lead them to see through the more vacuous expressions of therapeutic wishfulness. Compare André Green, for whom the work of art "opts for life's illusory clamor, as against the certainty of death."

Indeed, one of the distinguishing marks of the "French" challenge to the more sunny-minded versions of psychoanalysis generated by "American" writers is just this return to and preoccupation with Freud's "death-drive." The "French" infatuation with psychoanalysis during the past ten years—lucidly recounted in its sociological dimension by Sherry Turkle in this volume—involves a deep alliance with the Freud of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a text which is made to support two central tenets: that Desire (commonly so personified) is to be understood as an endless process of substitutive actions and "object-choices," a process in which every significant choice is also an announcement of loss (the presence of "death" in psychic mobility); and that, in the words of François Peraldi's contribution, "The ego is that part of the subject manufactured through a series of alienating identifications." Whatever else one might

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say of the cult of Lacan in Paris, these two tenets have carried over into much less obscurantist styles than his, and, once we jettison his half-formed linguistics based on Saussure, we have in them a challenge to "American" ideologies that derive from Heinz Hartmann's ego psychology. What is "alienating" about identifications in the "French" view, is the way in which they lead us to confuse historical realities with reality itself. And what is implied in the concept of mobile desire is that all attempts at closure of meaning mask motives to dominate their object. Understood in this way, the "French" stance turns out to have some unsuspected affinities with the kinds of open readings derived from ever-changing relationships which Norman Holland represents in theory and practice. Self and other each become relational, historical transforms of one another. (The difference, however, is crucial. For Holland there is no subject beyond the identity principle. For the "French" view derived from Lacan, the subject must exist, somehow beyond his reflection in image and word, or he would not be there to become "alienated.")

But it would be much of a mistake to equate the "French" contributions to this book with Lacan as it would to equate the "American" with one of its patriarchs. There are, if anything, even more splits in Paris than in other schools of theory. One can hear criticism of prevailing dogma in most of the "French" essays. Julien Bigras voices what seems to me the most telling limitation of his Parisian training:

Coupled with the awesome emphasis placed on theory, intellectualism was particularly manifest whenever the student-analyst had to discuss a patient's case. In fact he was often incapable of doing so; the patient was often little more than a pretext for performing what might be called theoretical gymnastics.

What is implied here is that the theoretical apparatus, whatever its internal merits and confusions, comes to defend against feelings and to prevent the experience of relationships between people. What could be less psychoanalytic! If the "American" fault is an overcommitment to experiences of synthesis and integration, the "French" counterpart seems to be a hypercathexis of theory itself.

But the opposition of "French" and "American" has its limits, which is why I have kept them in quotes. This book is both a symptom of and a contribution to the inter-penetration of styles that is coming to characterize psychoanalytic writing. On the theoretical level, we are beginning to see effects of the French in American writing (even in the "official" journals), and we are hearing of Margaret Mahler, René Spitz, even Otto Kernberg in French training. On the level of writing, we are beginning to see that the articulation of theory is itself a "literary" activity, involving a "linguaging" of experience as complex in its potential effects and ambiguities as the language it has traditionally taken as its object of analysis. The French have been especially challenging in this respect, which may be one reason why, for all his obscurity and tricksterism, Lacan continues to appeal to literary critics.

Three essays in *Psychoanalysis, Creativity and Literature* seem best representatives of this inter-penetration of languages. Norman Holland's "Literary Interpretation and Three Phases of Psychoanalysis" brings the question of



psychoanalytic language into historical focus and opens the possibilities of psychoanalytic interpretation to individual style. André Green's "The Double and the Absent" shows the kind of mastery that transcends notions of "applied" psychoanalysis. At once psychoanalytic and literary, his essay brings an eloquence of writing to a deep understanding of the place of writing and reading in the larger cultural space of shared experience. René Girard also exemplifies the mutuality that can derive from giving psychoanalysis and literature equal rights. In "Narcissism: The Freudian Myth Demythified by Proust," he reads Proust's representation of the mirage of narcissistic self-sufficiency to show that Proust understood what Freud acts out in his theory of narcissism. Girard also offers a jargonless expression of the possible future for literature and psychoanalysis:

Between the intuitions and limitations of psychoanalytical theory on the one hand, and of great literature on the other, there is a gap that we must bridge. Literature and psychoanalysis in the best sense need *each other*. My intention is not to build up Proust against Freud, or even less "literature" against "psychoanalysis," but to facilitate a dialogue between the two, a dialogue of equals that has never occurred so far, and through the fault of literary critics, really, as much as of psychoanalysts.

There are signs, then, that the Tower of Babel houses common places as well as closed lingos. The work of deeper translation has begun.

MURRAY M. SCHWARTZ

*Center for the Psychological Study of the Arts*  
State University of New York, Buffalo

*Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* by Gordon Williams.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978. Pp. vi + 344.  
\$12.50.

The issue Williams tackles here ought to be of fundamental interest not just for classical studies but for literary criticism in general: just how (if at all) can we evaluate and understand decline in a culture's literary tradition? Specifically, his focus is "Silver Age" Latin literature (spanning roughly the first two centuries A.D.). Because many of the writers of this age influenced European authors from the Renaissance on, this book should gain wide interest with non-classicists. Unfortunately, its shortcomings seriously mar its contribution.

The major fault, which subsumes the work's other deficiencies, is one that bedevils most classical philology and threatens to make it a solipistic science, the failure to come to grips with, much less utilize, modern critical methodologies. Likewise, Williams fails to articulate or justify what methodology he himself will use, although it soon becomes apparent. It is old style philology, where numerous texts are culled, collected, arranged, and juxtaposed, where verbal, stylistic, thematic similarities (and dissimilarities), all based, it turns out, on the categories of classical rhetoric, are noticed, toted up, and appreciated. But such cumu-

lations are not illuminating. The reason is clear: texts do not talk to texts. Works of literature manifest complex interactions between author and text, between author and his real or imagined audience, between author and his culture; they strive to mediate personal, social, and thus inevitably cultural contradictions. While it is apparent Williams feels these issues, he skirts them, and his analysis focuses on artificial formalistic aspects of the putative decline, without coming to grips with the untidy, but very revealing, disruptions between literary paradigms and the discrepant realities they no longer effectively control. Indeed, the inadequacy of Williams's outmoded technique is its very refutation, the poverty of insights it brings to its subject matter and the questions it leaves unanswered. Thus, Williams's conclusions are uninformative, though predictable, shibboleths: Roman literature declined because of pessimism in a decadent culture, escapism, retreat from reality, the increasing dominance of Greek culture, archaism, failure of intellectual nerve, and the changed conception of the function of literature (e. g., *imitatio* and *aemulatio*). Even if these were valid or useful assessments, they would not be explanations of literary decline, but manifestations. What we would really want to know is what lay behind these alleged phenomena. But locked into outworn and sterile critical modes and valuations, Williams lacks a *pou sto*, an external intellectual fulcrum from which to lever his material.

Regrettable too is Williams's unwillingness seriously to examine, except in a dismissive preterition, the issue central to the book's thesis: whether Roman literature really was in decline at all in the first two centuries A. D., indeed, whether we can legitimately speak of literary decline in any significant or fruitful way. Williams does acknowledge with some discomfort that this might be an issue, noting some critics have recently become increasingly favorable in their judgment of Silver Age Latin literature. But seeing a sinister coincidence of our contemporary tastes and standards with those of the decadent age under scrutiny, he decries this critical stance as "subjective" and worries, "Has literary history any value under such conditions? Is it even possible?" (p. 1). Obviously not for Williams, who biases his discussion with the old Roman notion, so prevalent in the Silver Age itself, that literary and political decline are results of moral decline.

Finally, it is significant that this work really dwells most on poetry (Williams's *métier*), while prose is treated (except for Tacitus' gelid *Dialogus*) in desultory fashion, a serious debility, given the work's ambitious aim. Strikingly, while Lucan, Statius, and Ovid are given great attention, Petronius languishes, quoted only once, and then just to instance Eumolpus' *declamatio* on the decadence of the age (pp. 11-12). What is there about the *Satyrikon*—rich, varied, restless—that merits this silence? One answer may be that Petronius' text probes too deeply—and disturbingly—into the profound cultural inconsistencies of Roman imperial life and literature. To confront this text would mean jarring the tidy, formalistic explanation of Roman literary decline Williams sets forth. In sum, while Williams's book is a sincere and erudite effort, its lack of a feasible critical method both stymies its author's investigations, making him avoid the crucial issues or offer superficial explanations, and thus frustrates his readers.

K. R. WALTERS

Wayne State University

*The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition* (2 vols.) by Gerard J. Brault.  
University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978.  
Pp. xviii + 574; vi + 282. \$20.00; \$12.00.

Gerard J. Brault's two volume analytical edition of *The Song of Roland* is an ambitious project handsomely executed. Volume I consists of a substantial introduction covering matters historical, exegetical, textual, and literary, followed by a *laisse-by-laisse* commentary on the poem. Both the Introduction and Commentary are copiously annotated; the volume concludes with a bibliography, a well-conceived index and an attractive series of illustrative plates. Volume II is Brault's edition of the Oxford *Song of Roland*, accompanied by a facing English translation. As the editor adopts a fairly conservative approach to the text, introducing emendations only where they are generally sanctioned by previous editors or necessitated by obvious scribal error, the notes to the manuscript are fairly brief. The notes to the text and translation are more extensive.

Volume II—the edition proper—is a treat. Although Brault notes that "This book is chiefly intended for medievalists," his text is as well-suited to the student as to the scholar. It is a remarkably clean text, as Brault has wisely chosen not to clutter the page with footnote numbers or typographical indications of emendations. The translation is also an asset; facing lines correspond exactly, and Brault has deliberately eschewed "any attempt to capture the flavor of the original" in order to "render each word and phrase accurately." Where this editor's *laisse* and line numbering differ from those in previous editions, conventional numbering is enclosed in brackets.

It is obvious from the extent of his annotation that Brault's project has been exhaustively researched: nearly one third of the first volume is devoted to notes (there are 615 footnotes on the 111-page introduction alone), and in both volumes the annotation, rich and scrupulously cross-referenced, encompasses a vast range of material. Ironically, however, the virtues of the annotation—its comprehensiveness and scrupulosity—become major weaknesses in the expository sections, the Introduction and Commentary. Quite simply, Brault has tried to do too much. In the Foreword he announces that he has intentionally adopted an eclectic method of analysis, a method which the book-jacket praises (not inaccurately) as "often little short of encyclopedic." Unfortunately, the eclectic and the encyclopedic conspire against Brault's objective of providing "a systematic literary analysis of the entire poem," for eclecticism emerges here rather as a lack of method, in which the mixed methodologies remain uncomfortably dissociated, while the encyclopedic impulse, the evident desire to leave no stone unturned, ultimately defies system, and thus cannot provide a coherent approach to the poem.

Commentary 19, on *laisse*s 133-135, will serve as illustration. These three *laisse*s describe Roland's sounding the oliphant, and the varying responses of the distant listeners in Charlemagne's entourage, climaxing in their recognition of Roland's distress. Brault's admittedly learned commentary takes us far afield. In the first six relatively brief paragraphs, he covers modern responses to the passage, the horn as a medieval hunting instrument, images of horn-blowers and archers in Romanesque bas-relief and sculpture, theological implications of

the hunting metaphor, associations of a horn with the supernatural in medieval secular literature, the recent arrival in France of carved elephant-tusk horns, and possible evocation, through the horn's call, of Psalm 130, and hence of the Last Judgment. Following these observations, during the course of which the commentator has alluded to Alfred de Vigny, the Andlau sculptor, Chrétien de Troyes, Robert Biket, *Huon de Bordeaux* and the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, is a three-page excursus on a crux in the Oxford manuscript (Ganelon's odd reference to Roland's flooding the field in the "conquest of Naples"), the discussion proceeding from the manuscript traditions through the washing-of-blood as a folk-motif in the *Tristan*, Chrétien and Shakespeare, to the motif's allegorical significance in Prudentius. Finally, Roland's having remained un wounded to this moment suggests to the commentator another association with the supernatural, and his speculation that a wound such as Roland's would probably result in prolonged agony leads to the conclusion that Roland's suffering "accentuates the parallel with the Passion of Our Lord." If there is a theme, a stance, a reading here, it remains obscure.

And it seems that the farther Brault is from the immediate text, the less controlled his flow of information becomes, for the somewhat patchwork nature of the Commentary, the air of free-association, is magnified in the Introduction which, divided into twenty-one separate sections, is structurally paratactic and baldly undersynthesized. Classification at all levels seems arbitrary at best. Why, for example, should the section entitled "Landscape" (# 16, essentially symbolic topography) have equal status with such broad topics as "The Church and the Arts," or "The Meaning of the *Song of Roland*"? Why, for that matter, isn't natural symbolic topography classified with man-made symbolic topography such as "The Road," or "The Two Cities," which appear under the rather puzzling heading of "Metaphorical Consistency" (# 15)? Why, in fact, aren't all types of symbolism included under one head? "Number Symbolism" turns up in "Narrative Devices and Techniques" (# 18), as does a sub-section on "Geometricism," which is surely an aspect of "Structure" (# 13). The encyclopedic impulse intrudes here too; I can find no rationale, other than a desire for ultimate comprehensiveness, for the inclusion of such sections as the grandiosely—and misleadingly—titled "Ambiguity and Logic" (# 9), which consists of two, brief, truistic paragraphs stating that, like all poetry, *Roland* employs the "metaphorical mode," and that thus "one must at times put aside twentieth-century notions of what constitutes logic or common sense." Audience, as well as order, is lost in the shuffle.

What we really have in the Introduction and Commentary is annotation masquerading as exposition, notes without numbers. But the flaws of Volume I are perhaps the inevitable result of what is, after all, a praiseworthy ambition, an ambition satisfyingly realized in other aspects of the work, and they should not, in the end, obscure the genuine value of Brault's undertaking. One cannot be all things to all readers, and if Brault's strengths do not lie in exposition or synthesis, his exemplary text and the rich range of information he makes accessible in both volumes should earn the gratitude of students and scholars for years to come.

ELIZABETH S. SKLAR

Wayne State University

*Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature* by William J. Kennedy. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. vii + 229. \$13.50.

Kennedy has two interests. One is in the rhetorical approach to discourse as a corrective to and expansion of currently fashionable verbal analyses, the other is in the literary history of the Renaissance. As a theoretician, he places his rhetorical interest in a context of linguistics, structuralism, and hermeneutics. As a practical critic and historian, he discusses in some detail nine major pieces of Renaissance literature, from Petrarch to Milton, with reference to a host of their contemporary Latin and vernacular works. Throughout he invites a view of the comparative advantages of rhetorical attitudes and offers a conclusion that, tonally at least, makes explicit his intention to have written something of a polemic.

The effectiveness of the polemic, if it is that, will have to be determined by someone who is not already, like the present reviewer, a partisan of the rhetorical approaches. Most rhetoricians will find Kennedy articulating forcibly a position which we already hold. I do not mean to imply that rhetoricians will not profit from reading this book; on the contrary, we—and, for that matter, all students of the Renaissance—will find this work illuminating and richly suggestive. But we are not among the theoreticians in Kennedy's audience. They are, rather, the students of de Saussure, Barthes, Jakobson, not to mention Hirsch, Gadamer, Derrida, Greimas, Todorov. In fact, so skillfully does the introductory chapter set up Kennedy's study that a rhetorician is likely to pass from it to the remainder of the book fearing that he will find therein only formalism (or structuralism or any other objectivism) in a new guise.

But that is not the case. No approach deserves to be called rhetorical, Kennedy well realizes, unless it keeps at the center of its concerns the complex interactions of a speaker and an audience. Thus, the real source of the "norms" Kennedy discusses are "voice" and "address." These are at the center of his explorations of "mode," "style," and "genre," a critical triad dear to the hearts of the theoreticians in his audience. Each part of this triad is given a section of the book.

"The Petrarchan Mode in Lyric Poetry" is the first major section of Kennedy's practical criticism. In it, *ethos* and *pathos* emerge as the two chief terms of his critical operations, the former naming the audience's perception of the speaker, the latter the speaker's efforts to control his audience's response. The Petrarchan mode, Kennedy argues, requires a perceptible split between the poet and his speaker, and a correlative split between a fictive and an actual audience. Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, Ronsard's *Les Amours*, and Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* are the major works discussed in this mode. So arranged, the works not only present developments in rhetorical norms of Renaissance Petrarchism but also offer a kind of history designed to illustrate Kennedy's claim "that strategies of voice and address characterize the mode better than elocutionary figures and other verbal devices do" (p. 71).

"Irony" is the major stylistic quality which Kennedy examines in—again, arranged in historical order—Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly*, Thomas More's *Utopia*, and Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, with most attention paid

to the last work. But it becomes apparent that "style," like "mode," names no real part of Kennedy's concern. "Irony" is, obviously, a stylistic quality, and most readers would agree that the word defines the styles of the three pieces examined. But Kennedy's examination continually veers away from *elocutio* and toward speakers and audiences, in order that his discussion of these pieces may show "the impossibility of understanding a text through its verbal strategies alone and . . . the need for coming to terms with the characterization of the speaker and his relationship with the audience" (p. 105).

Like "style," "genre" becomes a subject which allows Kennedy to group certain major works in the Renaissance and, more importantly, to offer a critique of certain fashionable approaches. However "genre" is singular among the triad of critical terms Kennedy uses to structure his work, for it is one he would most seek to preserve, reform, and continue to use. He would do that by giving it a flexibility that it lacks in modern theory. He concentrates on the epic genre, in particular Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, D'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. His ultimate view of that genre is one encompassing "an inspired speaker who is at once an audience of the action that he describes and a mediator between that action and his own audience" (p. 187). Thus, concepts of genre, he attempts to show, achieve flexibility by approaches through *ethos* and *pathos*.

Obviously, in so short a book the author cannot offer detailed analyses of individual pieces. This is perhaps nowhere more noticeable than in his rapid course through the epics. But if his sweep is broad, his stated intention is to be suggestive, to encourage further work. Moreover, as noted, it is quite apparent that his primary role is that of a critic of critics, one dissatisfied with current approaches, a stance made explicit several times and reiterated in the conclusion, part of which is "aimed against certain deconstructive tendencies to flatten out literature and literary history to the play of defined verbal anti-nomies" (p. 191).

Kennedy's work should have appeal for these critics, these non-partisan readers who are not yet convinced of the value of rhetorical attitudes toward discourse. Attracted by an evident concern with "norms" and with a familiar critical triad, they will be drawn into a case that challenges their very assumptions about how literary language works. It may be that some will find Kennedy's case a little too easily confirmable, for who can doubt the rhetorical nature of Renaissance literature? And "genre" as defined seems unquestionably useful in discussions of epic. Then, too, no one likes to have his territory threatened. Even the partisans, the rhetoricians, may wish *their* territory had been given a little more recognition through at least a clearer use of the history of rhetorical theory. Nonetheless, the breadth of Kennedy's reading and the depth of his knowledge of literary history lend a cogency to his argument which should be difficult for anyone to resist or gainsay.

THOMAS O. SLOANE

*The University of California, Berkeley*

*Whatever Happened to Shakespeare?* by Kenneth McClellan. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978. Pp. 230. \$18.50.

Kenneth McClellan utilizes his experience as director and actor (in over a hundred Shakespearean roles) in his lively description of the state of Shakespeare on the historical and contemporary stage. While his account is neither as scholarly nor as focused as, for example, Hazelton Spencer's *Shakespeare Improved*, which deals with Shakespearean adaptations on the Restoration stage, McClellan ambitiously wades through three centuries of productions, setting aside fewer than fifteen pages for translation and twelve for films. It is only "with some reluctance," he adds, that he has "set aside the many operas based on plays of Shakespeare . . ."

Nor does Mr. McClellan pretend to the objectivity of a scholarly Spencer. He dismisses without hesitation Dryden's *All for Love* ("a debasement of Shakespeare rather than an original work"), Oliver, Orson Welles, Zeferelli, Guthrie, Laughton, and especially Peter Brook. In a postscript characteristic of his style, he remarks that "the world will little note nor long remember the attempts of Messrs. Bond, Ionesco and Osborne to write better plays than Shakespeare on the subjects of Lear, Macbeth and Coriolanus."

Noting flaws in Mr. McClellan's own study would be too simple to do. One upset, for example, with his summary dismissal of Ernest Jones' Freudian views of Hamlet and Othello, need point only to McClellan's amateurish psychoanalysis of the directorial and designing methods of Gordon Craig: "The son of Ellen Terry by the designer E. W. Godwin, the real father-figure in his life was his mother's stage partner and off-stage lover Henry Irving." Continuing his "analysis" to explain once again what has happened to Shakespeare, McClellan adds, "As time went on, Craig sought to dethrone the dramatist even more fiercely than he had once sought to diminish the actor. Shakespeare replaced Irving as his Laisus-figure."

The book's chief flaw, it seems to me, is the unrelenting nature of McClellan's message as to what has happened to Shakespeare. From the very title to the final chapter, we are told that Shakespeare should always be pure—ungimmicky and even uncut. He never pauses long enough to ask if a production containing all the lines of the second quarto and First Folio of *Hamlet*, for example, was ever played or meant to be.

Still the work is worth reading and for more than its witty phrasing. McClellan's encyclopedic memory for the details of Shakespearean productions are as amusing as they are worthy of record. His memory of productions spans many years—from the all male and all female *As You Like It*; from the "inevitable" *Troilus and Cressida* with men playing women and the women, men; to the motif of endless bicycles in modern dress Shakespearean productions! It is for the recounting of hundreds of these production-oriented details that we owe most to Mr. McClellan's work.

PHILIP TRACI

Wayne State University

*Dickens and Reality* by John Romano. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. Pp. 187. \$12.00.

*George Eliot & The Novel of Vocation* by Alan Mintz. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. xi + 193. \$11.00.

*Anthony Trollope* by Arthur Pollard. London: Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. Pp. 208. \$12.75.

One might call this review "Pictures at an Exhibition," for terms from the art world suggest themselves to describe each work under consideration. Romano's study of Dickens is a small yet masterly "canvas," shot through, however, with touches of sfumato. Mintz's work calls to mind an Escher graphic (or Gestalt optical puzzle): in his study what we think of as background and foreground collide and seem to reverse places. And Pollard's study could be likened to nothing better than a William Frith painting, immediately recognizable and pretending to be no more than it is, for his author-guide to Trollope is filled with a veritable Derby-Day crowd of Trollopien characters—and novels!

John Romano's *Dickens and Reality* is an intriguing, ambitious attempt to define that uneasy relation between the imaginary and real worlds by focusing on the nature of "realist" form, the implications of that form for Dickens' themes and characterization, the role of free play in Dickens' language, the function of sentimentality with respect to aesthetics in *Oliver Twist* (a "social protest" novel), and the function of *Dombey and Son* as Dickens' "novel of reality"—his standard form, according to Romano. In each chapter Romano selects crucial passages from the novels and submits these to a finely-tuned search for paradigms of Dickens' form. Almost the first half of his study focuses on *Our Mutual Friend*, but attention is also devoted to *Little Dorrit*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and of course *Oliver Twist* and *Dombey and Son*. Romano's argument that Dickens creates "open form" is in itself familiar. But he goes one step further: Dickens' form is open because it opens onto, signals, and thus forever reminds us of the larger world of which he and his readers are a part.

Romano takes on a galaxy of stellar critics (from Ian Watt to J. Hillis Miller) who would disqualify Dickens from realism because his fantastic characters like Quilp or Jenny Wren contravene verisimilitude (i. e., "normal," everyday details), or because the world of Dickens' novels is wholly self-contained, reflexive, nonreferential. Romano's realist necessarily sees the artificiality of form. The solution is a subterfuge of form even as the novelist uses it to achieve "open form," which "acknowledge[s] fully that which lies beyond itself, and is greater than itself, and inclusive of itself" (p. 50). Thus the Veneerings' reflecting mirror in *Our Mutual Friend* (Ch. 2) is an ancient symbol of mimesis; but Dickens uses it not to acclaim but to controvert the authority of mimesis. If the mirror can richly reflect all the surface details of the Veneering gathering, it cannot image forth anything outside its limited purview—particularly Charlie Hexam and his world (the lower world) which break in upon the party and bring the news that begins the novel's real story. And just as Charlie's



intrusion disrupts the sense of inclusiveness and coherence which the "world" reflected in the mirror had seemed to give us, so Dickens, after narrowing down the world to encompass it within form, "punctures," transgresses against, that form to show the inherent impossibility of enclosing the outer world within the limits of form at all.

Romano also discovers paradigms of art in Dickens' themes and characterization. The river and its duples (mud, sweat, blood) in *Our Mutual Friend* represent a "primary reality," that which cannot ever be fully comprehended but has to do with the origins of life, the life force. Bradley Headstone works to deny his origins by rigidly imposing a surface form on his behavior and appearance, only to have this primary reality erupt and destroy him. Lizzie Hexam, however, is able to make predictions and see her "pictures" in the fire (obvious examples of patterning and form) only because she, unlike Bradley, has stayed close to and acknowledges her origins, the river. That is, only because she is committed to, aware of, the relatedness of past, present, and future can she make her predictions at all. Two conclusions are to be drawn: 1) if Dickens saw with Bradley how dangerous and distorting it was to subordinate instincts, origins, and personal truths to a rigid, artificial surface, he would hardly nail down all details in his work within a seamlessly coherent form; 2) thus Dickens' form "confesses," like Lizzie, its dependence on and relation to something larger than itself. "That is so because the excluded is precisely the locus of the larger, essential or primary reality on which the contents are dependent for their own reality... It is recognition of this dependence, rather than verisimilitude, that constitutes the realism of the artistic whole" (p. 76).

Romano also explores the role of free play in Dickens' language to illustrate his distinctive realism. If Romano sides with Marcus and Hillis Miller in recognizing this free play, he differs from them in arguing that it exists side by side with obviously referential language. Thus Clennam's meditation in concert with the Sunday bells he hears in "Home" (*Little Dorrit*) is constructed with language that is simultaneously determined, referential, and shot through with free play. His word game is determined by the rhythm of the bells and by their associated meaning, which is grim and stultifying. Yet Clennam continues filling in words to the rhythm of the bells after they cease ringing, and the game and his playful tone are at odds with the prevailing oppressive atmosphere. Dickens, too, sets up predetermined linguistic patterns in his prose, as through strongly rhythmic parallelism. But if he "fills in with words a 'pre-existing' rhythmic pattern, as Clennam fills in the strokes of the bell" (p. 104), there is also in his language a "distinct inappropriateness of tone" for "the language of the humorless depiction of the dismal city or the angry sarcasm toward its lawmakers, or the language, which follows, of the gloomy meditation on past Sundays. The reader will feel that a linguistic idea attractive and pleasing in itself is being indulged here..." (p. 105). On one hand, then, Dickens' linguistic play is a means of liberating language from what would otherwise be oppressive form or context; and this delight in language for its own sake is the affirmative counterpart to the negative deconstructionist ethos in his realist aesthetic. On the other hand, the disparity in his work

between tone and meaning, between reflexive and referential language, punctures the coherence of the text and once again throws us out upon and heightens our response to the actual.

There is not sufficient room to summarize the rest of Romano's argument; I can merely assert that it is a complex, subtle, and closely-knit one. But there is that sfumato, that obscuring smoke or fog, I mentioned earlier. The most troublesome obfuscation is Romano's use of the term "reality" itself. Possibly, in refusing to define the word's precise meaning, Romano is attempting with his audience what he feels Dickens did with his—through cracks and rents in his text to throw the reader back out upon that larger world, whatever it may be. And no doubt, as Romano himself avers, reality can never be adequately defined or comprehended. Still, one is uneasy with the shifts in Romano's terminology. At the outset, "reality" is a formless "sprawl" incapable of being reduced to or contained within the limits of form. With his discussion of Lizzie Hexam, reality suddenly becomes related to continuity, a pattern or form that even implies cause/effect relationships. Finally, in his discussion of *Oliver Twist*, reality is equated with a kind of radical freedom: Oliver's character is "shadowy" and vague because Dickens is reluctant to confine the innate freedom and mysteriousness of good within the limits of overdetermined language. And this final shift raises additional questions. Is not Quilp, too, an essentially "shadowy" figure, incapable of being apprehended in terms of verisimilitude? Is evil, then, not free or mysterious in the same way that good, embodied in Oliver, is? If so, why do Dickens' villains strike us as so much more forceful, so much less insubstantial, than his heroes?

One misses, also, a discussion of the *value* of form. That is, if Dickens' fidelity is to reality above all else, and if reality cannot by definition be contained within fiction, why are we given fiction at all? Surely part of the answer lies in Dickens' devout belief that imagination is very real indeed. But what is the imagination? Is it only a means of perception, as with Paul Dombey, or is it, a la Coleridge, a shaping force? The dilemma intensifies in Romano's discussion of *Oliver Twist*. If, on one hand, Dickens is celebrating the freedom of the real, and if, on the other hand, he forces the "philosophical" reader through rhetoric and design to see truth, does this mean Dickens denies to the reader the same freedom and release from design he insists on in his language, novels, and reality itself?

But sfumato, if it obscures, also means, in painting, "filled with points of light"—most apt for *Dickens and Reality*, which is very much worth having. Romano's prose is incisive and witty; his textual notes, index, and bibliography are most useful; and his is a qualification so necessary to a sensitive critic: a genuine love for his subject. Moreover, by positing both coherence and deconstruction within Dickens' texts, Romano's argument is more complex than those which opt merely for one or the other. Romano returns to us both the Dickens profoundly concerned with his world and the Dickens consciously refining his art. He also returns us to that perhaps unfathomable mystery of the elusive boundaries between the real and the imaginative. That boundary is still a Sphinx—Romano has not entirely unravelled the riddle—but neither is he, unlike some challengers, devoured.

The thesis of Alan Mintz's *George Eliot & The Novel of Vocation* is that *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* not only reflect the nineteenth-century obsession with work but in fact turn on the dilemmas and possibilities of vocation and hence inaugurate a new genre: the novel of vocation. This new development, argues Mintz, resulted from the century's secularization of the old Protestant ethic, wherein vocation was a spiritual "calling" integral to man's salvation. Eliot, of course, was exposed to this ethic through her Evangelical background, but in her novels she purges vocation of its dogmatism and substitutes "intellectual passion" for a heavenly call while retaining vocation's spiritual significance. Thus, to err in one's choice of vocation, as Farebrother knows from the beginning, or to fail in one's vocation, as Lydgate discovers, is wellnigh to lose one's soul. The potential of vocation, conversely, is its ability simultaneously to satisfy ambition (or egoism) and benevolence (service to society).

All this is reasonable enough. Whence my objection, my Escher or Gestalt motif? In insisting that all in *Middlemarch* revolves around vocation, Mintz confounds foreground and background. To assert that *Middlemarch* is "principally concerned with the problems of middle-class work" (p. 6) is akin to saying that Austen's novels are principally concerned with marriage. These statements are true in a sense. But as W. J. Harvey (who, significantly, is not cited by Mintz) has observed, "the theme of vocation in *Middlemarch* . . . is clearly central and yet it is not the theme as such that makes its impact. . . . In fact, [it] is a lowest common denominator, a reduction we make purely for convenience—from a number of very different histories" (*The Art of George Eliot*, 1963, pp. 153-54). Thus Mintz can allot little space to Dorothea. True, he places her at the "symbolic center" of the novel: as a woman, she has no direct access to vocation and thus illustrates the extreme pressures the community can exert on vocational choice. But what he sees as irony, namely, that this character at the "symbolic" center "has no profession whatsoever" (p. 60), surely suggests that he is imposing the wrong framework on the novel. Again, Mintz is bemused by Eliot's solution to Will Ladislav's dilemma of "vocational decision": after trying art, politics, and journalism, he is finally rescued through marriage to Dorothea, i. e., through "the older means of occupational assistance: the patronage system" (p. 132). If Eliot's intent is a dissection of nineteenth-century vocation we should indeed be puzzled. But if we turn to Eliot as moralist the jarring note disappears: there is a lovely poetic justice in Dorothea's giving Will a living, for if it were not for Bulstrode's machinations, Will would have had this living all along. Finally, Mintz's argument that Eliot's vocational focus demanded a new mode of characterization, a technique "capable of a finer concentration on the gradual changes that mark the movement from one stage of life to another" (p. 56) could surely be explained by other means. Is not Eliot's characterization part of what one might term the literature of *process*, with its roots in Austen and its culmination in Henry James? One could quibble with other faults—Mintz's tendency not to provide transitions or clear connections between passages—but one, though minor, is inexcusable: the well-known Harriet Taylor Mill, wife of John Stuart Mill, is *thrice* called "Helen"—Mill's step-daughter! (pp. 50-51).

This is not to say that Mintz's work is without merit. Ironically, it is as a

thorough study of the *background* of Eliot's novels that his work is chiefly valuable. He provides sound discussions of nineteenth-century autobiographies centered on vocation, of nineteenth-century medicine, and of Eliot's sources for her vocational theme. As well, Mintz's literary analysis is often perceptive. He notes, for example, that characters' vocational success may be assessed by measuring the text *they* produce (Lydgate's miniscule treatise on gout, Casaubon's fragments) against the one the narrator produces, and the chapter devoted to Lydgate and Frabrother (Ch. 4) is especially fine. Thus Mintz's work is worth examining, not only for his discussion of *Middlemarch* and its background but for the shorter sections devoted to *Daniel Deronda* and to Beatrice Webb and James Joyce. But, to borrow from Francis Bacon, I would recommend tasting, not swallowing.

Arthur Pollard's *Anthony Trollope* does not give us a "new" Trollope, but that is not Pollard's intent: his work is "an author-guide, going systematically through Trollope's voluminous output, omitting only the ephemera" (p. ix). As that "output" includes 47 novels, 5 collections of short stories, 4 biographical studies, 4 major travels books, 2 plays, and numerous sketches, Pollard's surveying it all in approximately 200 pages is no small feat. I do not think Prof. Pollard would object to my terming this book journeyman work; and if at times his prose lapses into the pedestrian, as if groaning under the burden of his task, his guide will be a most serviceable one for undergraduates or more advanced students wondering just where to enter to get their feet wet in the considerable waters of Trollope's work. After a brief biographical sketch, Pollard surveys Trollope's writings by grouping according to theme, length, and, in some cases, chronology: Irish novels and stories; social criticism novels; the Barchester chronicles; political novels; "other" longer novels, 1858-70; shorter novels, 1863-74; the "final phase"; and "miscellaneous"—the *Autobiography* plus short stories, travel-books, etc. Pollard begins each chapter with relevant background (e. g., an examination of the gentry) or an assessment of the novels' achievement, then examines each novel or work in some, though necessarily not exhaustive, detail. Plots are summarized, excerpts are quoted, and major characters analyzed to give a sense of the novel's content. His work is thus truly a guide, not only surveying Trollope's works but directing our eyes toward their charms, away from their longueurs.

Pollard's survey, then, is complete, informative, and for the most part balanced—though he is at times a bit crusty in his insistence on the "Victorianism" of Trollope. Most important, he achieves what he sets out to do: to provide a useful author-guide. I have two suggestions, though. Since the work is intended for novice Trollopian, a chronological list of Trollope's work appended to the text would clarify the order of publication that is sometimes obscured by Pollard's groupings. Secondly, because the reader must presently know in which novel a character appears to look him or her up, an index listing for characters' names would help the amateur to avoid getting lost in that Derby-Day multitude of Trollope's creations.

LINDA K. HUGHES

University of Missouri-Rolla

*Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* by Nina Auerbach. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. 222. \$11.50.

*Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing and Atwood* by Barbara Hill Rigney. Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978. Pp. 148. \$15.00.

On the cover of Nina Auerbach's fascinating book, three disembodied hands reach out to meet. Crimson shapes against an orange background, they look at first like shadow-animals cast by hands against a wall: lobster claws or wolves. This *trompe-l'oeil* graphic is an apt visual analog of Auerbach's unsettling critical imagination and the bold conclusions of her book. *Communities of Women* should become a special classic of feminist criticism, a book which testifies as strongly to the personal energies of its author as to the vitality of the sisterly intellectual communities, from *Feminist Studies* to the Radcliffe Institute, which nurtured its debates.

Auerbach takes as her subject the fictional treatment of the collective power of women grouped in the family, the school, the community and the state. She both incorporates and challenges the new feminist historiography about the special powers and moral strengths of what Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has called "the female world of love and ritual"; for in Auerbach's analysis the separate society inevitably evolves towards the values and tactics of the male power elite. Alternating between extended close analyses of several major novels, and stimulating references to a wide range of related literary and historical texts, Auerbach shows how the female community moves out of its passive and sanctified domestic enclosure into history, until Muriel Spark's "Brodie set" becomes a micro-Fascist brigade, and the militant women of international radical feminism (in Monique Wittig's *Les Guerillères* and Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Amazon Odyssey*) take on all the trappings of male power. In assuming public authority, in organizing and arming for its heroic quest, and in consciously mythologizing its own origins, this Amazonian collective finally "destroys the possibility of a female world as a sheltered shared enclave whose values are private and unique" (p. 190).

Auerbach calls her mixed "community of novels" an "appropriate oddity" (p. 30). In a chapter called "Waiting Together: Two Families," she boldly pairs the matriarchies of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Little Women*, a reading that convinces us of Alcott's seriousness and pathos without reducing Austen to domestic comedy. She bridges the worlds of *Cranford* and *Villette* by suggesting that Gaskell has as her model the extraordinary sisterhood of Haworth Parsonage, which she would later document in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Again we are made to see the paradoxical power of the female community; *Villette* is a small state ruled by women whose administrative skills are professional rather than matriarchal, and Lucy Snowe is educated in "the art of ruling" as well as in her own emotions. When Auerbach turns to Gissing and James, and the male "vision of the female community as an equivocal source of power," the book loses some of its momentum; the "odd women" and the Bostonians lack the passionate coherence, and the unpredictability, of the communities ima-

gined by women. But the concluding chapter is fresh, surprising, and courageous. By choosing to examine Muriel Spark's astringent modernist fables of the female will to power and to cite Simone de Beauvoir's "lugubrious analysis of the fantasy of a feminine 'counter-universe'" (p. 183), rather than to celebrate the new separatist sisterhoods of Marge Piercy, Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich, Auerbach makes an ideological, as well as a critical commitment.

It is in the area of ideology that this book will arouse controversy. Auerbach concludes with a nostalgia for the "individuality" of the little women, and "the humanly interdependent courtesy of Cranford," the substantiality of nineteenth-century realism and nineteenth-century heroines. Undoubtedly some will find the direction of her argument pessimistic, and will protest that a different selection of texts would reveal a more self-aware and hopeful feminist bonding, as in the novels of Gail Godwin, Lisa Alther, M. F. Beal, and Fay Weldon. From a historical perspective, the picture of a female community only recently invaded by violence, ambition, and ego seems inaccurate; the suffragists of 1910 perceived as vividly as Ti-Grace Atkinson that military discipline was the price to be paid for political power.

Yet we can go to other sources for history and ideology. Auerbach has a profoundly literary imagination; indeed, history as she uses it often seems to be a kind of serial novel with wonderful characters. What she gives us in this book is the vision of a female community as an organic entity, endowed with a consistency of purpose that is almost mythic. These matriarchal families, villages, schools, have an uncanny power to sustain themselves, to attract and annihilate male invaders, that seems to derive from their sublimation of sexual and economic appetite. Poor and hungry, they have channelled their immense consuming energies into strategies of survival. Auerbach's delight in paradox, her interest in startling textual juxtapositions, and the "elegant economy" (to borrow Cranford's highest praise) of her prose, constantly shakes ideas into new relations, and leads us to think about familiar texts in new ways. Not everyone will agree with her conclusions, but her book reminds us how stubbornly and rewardingly the feminist critic remains her own woman, whatever communities she joins.

The long title of Barbara Hill Rigney's short book sums up most of its contents, (except that the feminist novels are four in number: *Jane Eyre*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Four-Gated City*, and *Surfacing*; and the studies are Laingian). Rigney's thesis is that madness in the novel is "connected to the female social condition" (p. 7) and is an understandable response to the punishing *logos* of an insanely patriarchal society. Her model for this analysis throughout is R. D. Laing, whose views on oppression, and attacks on Freudian theory, traditional psychotherapy, the family, and the state, have some parallels to feminist ideology, but hardly constitute a feminist psychology. While Rigney acknowledges some of Laing's limitations, and especially his romanticization of insanity, she nonetheless makes unquestioning use of his terminology and his definitions. Laing's poetic notion of schizophrenia as the survival strategy of the "broken-hearted," the quest of a split personality for the wholeness which a deeply divided society tries to prevent, is metaphor rather than medicine. This is what Rigney means when she claims that "each novelist indicates that women in particular suffer

from more or less obvious forms of schizophrenia, being constantly torn between male society's prescriptions for female behavior, their own tendencies toward the internalization of these roles, and a nostalgia for some lost, more authentic self" (p. 119). While this casual psychiatric labelling cannot harm fictional characters, such as Clarissa Dalloway, it is disturbing to think that real women struggling with such basic human dilemmas might be termed "schizophrenic." Rigney's refusal to question Laing's authority, to seek alternative perspectives, to ask why Doris Lessing, for example, turns to Laingian ideology after Marxism and before Sufism, deprives her book of a certain kind of psychological and cultural credibility. In her dependence on Laing, she still seems tied to a patriarchal tradition, albeit a counter-cultural one; the recent work of Jean Baker Miller and Nancy Chodorow, among other feminist psychologists, would be a useful corrective to Laing's excess.

Fortunately, her readings of these four novels take her beyond Laing to some exciting hypothesis about the female psyche. Although *Jane Eyre* is by now a standard text for feminist critics, and Bertha Mason has been frequently written about as a prototype for the "mad wife" in women's fiction, Rigney has some new things to say about the novel's equation of chastity and sanity, and about Jane's search for the mother-principle. Rigney argues that while none of the female characters in *Jane Eyre* is an adequate mother-figure for Jane, she achieves spiritual contact with a cosmic "moon-mother" who is associated with chastity but also with female consciousness. In identifying with this maternal spirit of self-respect, Jane unconsciously rejects "the role of motherhood for herself as being yet another threat to autonomy" (p. 36).

When Rigney examines the quest for the "metaphoric mother" (especially in her excellent chapter on Margaret Atwood) the Laingian apparatus fades into the background, and we see a uniquely-structured female literary psychology, with its own symbolism of nature, mirrors, and doubles. As she points out, the existing literature on the image of the *döppelgänger* is inadequate for these works by women writers; her treatment of the double as "the recognition of the tragedy of one's own fragmentation" (p. 10) provides a helpful feminist re-interpretation. Occasionally Rigney misreads her texts; she thinks that St. John Rivers wants marriage to Jane to be sexless, and that Richard Dalloway "agrees" that Clarissa should sleep alone. But such lapses are minor; overall, Rigney's view of sexual withdrawal as an initial phase in a psychic process leading to re-integration, authenticity, and survival, is moving and persuasive. Like Auerbach's phenomenology of the female literary community, Rigney's analysis of the feminist psychic quest should generate lively and productive controversies.

ELAINE SHOWALTER

Douglass College, Rutgers University

*Emerson and the Orphic Poet in America* by R. A. Yoder. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978. Pp. xvi + 256. \$13.50.

*Emerson and Literary Change* by David Porter. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. xiii + 248. \$15.00.

"In spite of much literature on the subject," Stephen Whicher noted in 1957, "an adequate account of Emerson's theory and practice of poetry remains to be published." The concluding phrase undoubtedly exempts the pioneer studies of Carl Strauch, a lifework already well-known at the time. But Whicher states the case, as does Hyatt Waggoner's review of Emerson's achievement as a poet (*Emerson as Poet*, 1974), that makes the publication of these books by R. A. Yoder and David Porter so significant. Probably because even in a work as recent as Waggoner's Emerson's achievement as a poet is considered modest—consensus of a century of criticism, the poetry not to be compared with the high achievement of the prose—the poetry has not been engaged for what it so obviously is in view of Emerson's belief in the primacy of the Imagination: the focal, deepest ground of his life. Poetry always is for a poet, and Emerson, as he claimed, was a poet whose work *as a poet*, both Yoder and Porter demonstrate, is as central to American poetry as his work as a thinker (culture hero) has always been believed to be in respect to American thought. Yoder and Porter depict different Emersons—at best, complementary Emersons—but they agree on his centrality as a poet and on the continuing centrality of just those issues (for a poetics inevitably expresses religious, philosophical, epistemological, and ethical concerns) that Emerson probed in his poetry. It would be enough to say in praise of Yoder and Porter that by revivifying Emerson's poetry in their readings of the drama of its deep allegories of Imagination they compel us to re-read it. (And on this reading I find in it more excellences than they allow.) But as an Emersonian and as one of the "anonymous scholars" Yoder mentions, I also wish to say that these books are noteworthy because they acknowledge their foundations in earlier work and renew in terms of perspectives scholarship and criticism have since brought forward the inquiries that in our time have established Emerson as a "central man." Not since Bishop's *Emerson on the Soul* have we had work of such importance.

What matters here is not an upward reassessment of the poetry but an appreciation of Emerson's profound commitment to poetry (Imagination) and its central place as the generative source of his work. Emerson himself spoke the critical consensus (and as Porter shows, the very thing that pressed him to liberate the Imagination in prose) when he said, "I am born a poet, of a low class without doubt yet a poet." He knew—and we know—that his "singing" was "'husky.'" Even so he insisted that it was his "nature & vocation" to be a poet, and in the high sense of "perceiver & dear lover of the harmonies that are in the soul & in matter, & specially of the correspondences between these & those." Here *perceiver* speaks for the Imagination, and *correspondences* for the metaphysical faith that early in Emerson's career assured him of "harmonies"—the spiritual vision, the transcendence represented by the binary structure and conversion plot of his poems, the vision soon



enough challenged by his experience. Both Yoder and Porter begin here, with the recognition, as Yoder says, that the initial design of Emerson's poems is "founded in the order of correspondence" and that this design "implies the easy victory of imaginative insight over ordinary, mundane powers." And beginning here, both follow the development charted by Whicher—the descent from imaginative heights and assurance to the mid-world of scepticism and endless accommodation—to arrive, however, at different conclusions and different Emersonian traditions in poetry.

Yoder tells this story of transcendence and descendance in terms of the Orphic poet-figure so conspicuous in Emerson's work, and though the second part of his book is devoted to the poems he tells the story chiefly in terms of ideas, as an intellectual historian. He does not approach the poems as closely as Porter. Their literal activity does not concern him as much as the influences on them (for example, George Herbert on the early poems) and the legacy they bequeathed to American poets. Telling the story twice, first in an account of the development of Emerson's Orphic mind, he recalls for us a great tradition and the more immediate context of European romanticism that nurtured Emerson's Orphic aspiration and subsequently sustained his Orphic compromise.

Emerson's Orphic career is the story of the Poet-hero (the American Scholar, as Porter shows, for the fable is everywhere in Emerson's work) who believes in the "conversation of the world." He believes, as Emerson says in "The American Scholar," that "as the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so is it ever," and the poet, the godlike man, may give it "his signet and form." He is Orphic by virtue of being possessed by this "heroic passion," the passion to conform things to his thought, to invest "dust and stones with humanity, and [make] them words of Reason." And he is Orphic, too, by virtue of his belief in the sovereign power of the Imagination. In the conclusion to the paragraph in *Nature* (1836) from which the previous quotations are taken, Emerson says: "The Imagination may be defined to be the use which the Reason makes of the material world."

Now the Emerson who believed this is clearly a Promethean figure serving revolutionary ends. He is the exalted early Emerson who, under stress experience (a word underlined by the essay of that name), yielded revolution for revelation (song), external for internal apocalypse, spiritual summits for the mundane mid-world. The later Emerson, who accepts the "titmouse dimension," is the faithful sceptic who conforms to nature and seeks the answers to her riddles. He has yielded the vertical ascent, and his humbler task is to reconcile or balance the polarities of the horizontal, the actual prudential world. Orpheus-Prometheus, Osman, Saadi, the Plato of *Representative Men*, Merlin—the sequence of these figures in Emerson's work tells of the descent of Orpheus, of Emerson's defeat by nature.

This defeat, according to Yoder, is the Emersonian legacy, and in a compensatory way he sees it as a victory, hence as a *valuable* legacy. He explains:

Because America has always had great expectations of a sublime and philosophical literature, its poets have accepted the tradition that Orpheus, the first poet, was the Whole or Universal Man, and they have tried to

live up to Emerson's magnificent fable of the Orphic poet that promises freedom, revolution, and transcendence. But fable meets fact, and in the meeting progeny discover the severer limitations of their kind. The key to Emerson's prolific fatherhood is that, having made impossible demands on poets, he does not abandon them when they cannot do what he asks; his own example offers the ideal of a lesser Orpheus, who understands "the precise fact of our condition...."

And so Yoder gives us an Emersonian tradition of poetry of the dark, at the edge; a poetry of qualified idealism and limitation whose chief practitioners are Dickinson, Stephen Crane, Robinson, Frost, Stevens, and Ammons. He puts in eclipse the brighter Orphic Emersonian tradition of Whitman, Pound, Williams, Stevens (in others' reckoning), Hart Crane, and (I would add with qualifications in regard to idealism) Olson and Duncan.

And Porter? In giving us the fullest account we have had of Emerson's poetics and the struggle for "aesthetic liberation" it involved, he traverses a similar course from transcendence to descendance only to find in Emerson's *descendentalism* values wholly overlooked by Yoder. Where Yoder's work may be said to support the literary establishment, Porter's may be said to subvert it. And this is in keeping with his fresh view of Emerson as preeminently an *artist* concerned with formal matetrs. As artist, Emerson subverted the literary establishment of his time out of vital imaginative necessity. He had to shatter the formal constraints of his own poems—those coverting mechanisms, with their upward, transcending, abstracting plots—and discover for himself the imaginative possibilities of the spaciousness of prose.

No one has told so exactly the faults of Emerson's poetry and showed why we so much appreciate his prose, the *poetry* of the prose, to cite a chapter title in Waggoner's book, where Waggoner acknowledges that Emerson's prose is "more imaginative" than his verse. Yes, *more imaginative*. For even when the poems enact the correspondential vision and do the necessary Emersonian work of turning "adversity to advantage," they warp away from life, life leaks out. I borrow Porter's phrases and his measure of poetry—the very measure that finally moved Emerson to liberate his imagination (lower-case: no longer in the service of Reason), to turn it back/down from its translation of life into ideas, to life. (In this context, consider Williams' insistence on *descent* and *no ideas but in things*, and the Pound-Olson insistence on image over symbol.) Liberation is in this descent, and if descent is the defeat of one kind of aspiration it is also the victory of another. The extremity that proposed this redirection is evident in the polarity of ascent-descend and in the view that poetry is higher than prose, the one a vehicle of higher Truth, the other the vehicle of mundane truths. Emerson himself believed this "genteel" view—that poetry is limited to "poetic" subjects—and so in moving from it he rehearsed the continuing struggle between the genteel-spiritual and liberated-experiential traditions that for Porter represent the *discontinuity* of American poetry.

Experience is the crux. Nothing shows better Emerson's vocation as poet than his determination to liberate the Imagination in its behalf, to fasten it, as he said of words, to visible things, to give over the vertical (the correspondence

of lower to higher) for the horizontal (the correspondence of language and thing, function and form), to forego remembering and mental deliverance for an active exploration of experience, to find imaginative means—among them, speech, the open form of the essay—equal to both the present activity of thought and the richness of the actual world. Where once Emerson dreamed the dream of consciousness that informs his early poetry—he would eat the apple of the world, swallow it—now he would marry it, possess its energy and life by coupling with it.

Porter speaks of this achievement as “a breakthrough into spaciousness” and so his alignment of Emerson and Charles Olson is not unexpected. Some may find it—and the reassessment of Emerson that makes it possible—shocking, but it is just: “Olson and Emerson a century apart called for a new reconciliation of the world and the language in which it is to be experienced.” And with Olson as a touchstone, we know that Porter’s version of the Emersonian legacy will diverge from Yoder’s. It does, but with qualification. For open form, he believes, led to a disturbing “atomization”:

The great irony is that, in opening up poetic space, [Emerson] intended to demonstrate “the cheerful hint” in all things “of the immortality of our essence.”... With the disappearance of that faith, what remained was an open form crowded with intractable experience, manifesting more clearly than ever the multitudinous of experience and the failure of the idealistic philosophy. The form was capable of a great gathering of life without any certain way to understand it.

The failure of the idealistic philosophy is indeed the issue. But Porter is himself not yet liberated from its assumptions. That he finds in the open form of Emerson’s work “the first glimpses of the wasteland” and feels compelled to *understand* (to put experience in a certain framework, as in *Understanding Poetry*) indicates this. He is right to choose Olson as a gauge of the poetic enterprise, but he has yet to fully appreciate the open universe poets like Olson inhabit and the extent to which this has liberated the imagination and permitted what Williams called “unbound thinking.” If Porter’s interpretation is sound, and I think it is, then Emerson would have approved Hart Crane’s concern with only the absolute nature of experience and preferred to *understanding* Williams’ concern with *thinking with the poem* and in the writing living in the moment that he truly lives. Had Porter carried his study, as Kenneth Burke would say, to the end of the line, he would have had to consider texts like Whitehead’s *Process and Reality* which underwrite postmodern open poetics and provide a post-wasteland generation of poets with another definition and assurance of *meaning*. Which is to say, as Hart Crane said, that we need not succumb to the “wasteland” nor give privileged statue to a poetry of despair, of the dark, of the edge.

It does not detract from the merit of these studies to note their incompleteness. How is it neither Yoder nor Porter treats Fenollosa, who brought so much of Emerson’s poetics over into significant use in the modern era? Again, how is it Robert Duncan is omitted, this poet of liberated imagination whose Orphic determination is as conspicuous as Emerson’s and whose work, founded on

other assumptions, has not become that of a "lesser Orpheus"? And how is it a scholar so thorough as Yoder has not considered a book so much to his purpose and to the Orphic revitalization of language, Gerald Bruns' *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language*?

But who isn't incomplete? It is only fair to add that these excellent studies may provoke the poets of the open tradition to recognize Emerson as the father of the "libertarian aesthetics," and every bit as important to them as Whitman. Perhaps the next edition of *The Poetics of the New American Poetry* will include Emerson.

SHERMAN PAUL

*The University of Iowa*

*The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon* by William M. Plater.  
Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978. Pp. xvii + 268.  
\$12.50.

For the amateur reader, baffled or bemused by Thomas Pynchon's "multiplicity" (Plater's word), there is no aid or comfort in this new study, which compounds Pynchon's difficulties with several of its own. Such a reader would be well-advised to return to Tony Tanner's early essays in *City of Words*, or to Edward Mendelsohn's edition of essays in the *Twentieth-Century Views* series, or, *faute de mieux*, to Joseph Slade's guidebook to Pynchon's novels, published by the Warner Library. Professionals and diehard specialists, to say nothing of these interested in shifts of current critical winds, will however find much intelligent analysis here, though their interest may turn to exasperation before the last page is turned. Plater's book tends to reflect, not to reflect on, the various ties and preoccupations of its subject, and there is no small amount of subliminal special pleading. Moreover, since Pynchon's work presents a contemporary critical challenge of some magnitude, containing as it does at least one novel which most of its critics agree cannot be analyzed in any coherent way, Plater's choice of focus is a significant index to what happens in contemporary criticism of contemporary literature when text explication is renounced before it begins.

The method here is post-structuralist. As the subtitle suggests, however, the technique employed does not deconstruct or dismantle or engage in other forms of divestiture, but instead "reconstructs" the author's work. Why it should require reconstruction is a question Plater does not exactly answer, but the implication is that Pynchon's work lies in ruins. Judging from Plater's texture and tone, I take him to mean that he re-organizes the organizations and systems found in Pynchon so that they may be examined, if not ultimately analyzed (for reasons I shall get to shortly). The systems that are "reconstructed" are those familiar to all of Pynchon's readers: the Wittgensteinian "case"; systematic tourism, allied with metaphysical and actual colonialism; entropy and systems degeneration; paranoia and the uncertainty principle. Plater assumes a basic

familiarity in his reader with each of these. What he does is to find the order *in* the order of the fiction, for "Pynchon makes his world comprehensible by showing how various things are related, how there are parallel existences, and, possibly, how there is reconciliation" (xiv). So there *is* an "order" in the fiction to reconstruct or reconstrue, critically. But perhaps not. "The only thing the reader can do with the facts of Pynchon's novels is to try to impose some order on all the clicks and whistles, all the noise" (14). If the order is imposed, then it must be the critic's, not the author's. Where *is* the order to be reconstructed, then, and whose is it, Plater's or Pynchon's? By contradicting himself, Plater recapitulates the typical Pynchon double-bind situation, Oedipa Maas's in particular. Elsewhere, he examines Pynchon's entropic processes, seeing him as a visionary pessimist, the latest in line of a series of dark Romantics obsessed with power and madness.

Combining notions concerning entropy and information theory, Plater reduces the characters in the fiction, and in some sense the reader of the fiction, to utter helplessness. "Regardless of where they are and what illusions of history the anarchists may harbor, they are all enclosed within the system of time that is smoothly, steadily winding down to an anarchy, the undifferentiated chaos of no time" (41). "Since criteria for finite measurement do not exist, uncertainty relations are all that can be known and they are expressions of the interdependence of continuities and discontinuities" (101). "As a force of equilibrium, love is another name for entropy and dying may thus be viewed as an act of self-love" (139). The helplessness apparent here is emphasized even more in the chapter on paranoia, where Pynchon's "ominous," "mysterious," and "hidden" elite is given the credit for laying waste to the earth. Statements of this sort have become standard in writings on Pynchon and to some degree in much current criticism; they are the critical equivalents to the loss of the self, the erasure of the subject, and the substitution of the system for the individual.

As far as Pynchon's tone is concerned, this kind of analysis is inaccurate. The reader senses the discrepancy each time Plater offers a quotation from the novels: though the literal meaning may be what he says it is, the tone—as is typical in Pynchon—is often manically jolly, wisecracking or comic. This *tone* is disregarded as if it were not significant information. Pynchon's use of entropy theory is examined but his jokes aren't, rooting Pynchon in Rilke and Nietzsche but not in Scott Fitzgerald or Captain Marvel or *Mothra*, the supposed basis of his next novel. The appalling humorlessness of this book makes Pynchon into a grim Puritan doomsdayer, damned by his Calvinism into a kind of mechanistic apocalypticism. But to analyze Pynchon's tone is to recognize that to some degree the humor produces a dissociated effect, as if the situations were not imaginary but fantastical, and the characters neither "real" nor believable.

Plater perceives this disjunction but does nothing with it. He admits that most of Pynchon's characters are unbelievable, citing the sailor Mehemet in *V.* as one of Pynchon's "few believable characters." Elsewhere he observes that in this fiction "people and places are incidental to systems and forces." If one cannot believe in the characters enmeshed in the systems, then what is being distorted in the systems themselves? Plater does not concern himself with the

number of Pynchon's characters or their depthlessness. He tries to assert that there is a concern for caring among some of them, but as for love, it is another name for entropy, and in any case cannot take place between two- or one-dimensional characters. The difference between Pynchon's cartoon characters and his more embodied ones, such as the Polders in *Gravity's Rainbow*, is, however, not fully explored.

Plater does not take on the question of whether these unbelievable characters inhabit some unrealistic variety of fiction, such as allegory or fable. He does, however, examine both uncertainty and paranoia at length. Paranoia, that disease of overinterpretation and mania, "may be the closest we can come to naming any theory that explains Pynchon's fictional world" (189). Paranoia assumes connectedness and bonding, of secret signs and hidden order and one's own victimization. Its result is the feeling of helplessness, and intelligence and abstraction are its helpmates and cohorts. It is odd, considering Plater's use of Freud in his discussion of the death-instinct, that Freud's more plausible theory of paranoia is never once mentioned. In Plater, paranoia is all of system and works from the top downward. No mention is made of the idea that paranoia is the result of blocked, converted, and projected Eros for one's own sex. In this discussion, it is always "out there," in some "grand design we cannot quite see" (190). That Plater never once inquires into the classical psychoanalytic basis of paranoia means that he has no way to connect paranoia with fantasy. The entire subject, since it is cut off from the body, becomes instantly mystified in "grand designs." To fill in the gaps would raise the presumably taboo subject of homosexual themes in Pynchon's work, which have become more obvious with each novel. Plater takes Pynchon too much at Pynchon's word, and accepts his explanations as proper and thus sees the military-corporate sources for feelings of persecution but not the sexual-erotic ones. It is thus no accident that Pynchon's characters are disembodied.

Similarly, the discussion of uncertainty in this book relies on Pynchon and Heisenberg and leaves the topic in an intellectual aether, where it generally stays in post-modernist criticism. Again, the result is a feeling of helplessness: "the more we zero in on dream and fantasy, the less we know about reality, or what passes for reality" (115). So there's no point in doing much of anything. But to what degree is the uncertainty principle dragged in by Pynchon and Plater to forestall commitments to action that one is too "cool" or frightened to take? Consequently, the Counterforce in *Gravity's Rainbow* is also a system and is "an inherent failure." But all this is based on Pynchon's universal metaphysic of control and power, where only absolutes have any lasting validity. The uncertainty principle may well be a theory employed to justify ironical stances toward others in caring and love, for fear of revealing the hidden self, or the vacant self. By positing uncertainty as a purely mentalistic function, unrelated to voyeurism, for example, Plater once again helps to dislocate the entire subject.

"...Pynchon has prevented definitive perceptions by forcing critics into uncertainty relations with his observable world and thus into distracting complexity" (132). "In a sense, *Gravity's Rainbow* has happened before in *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49*, but Pynchon's latest novel is beyond comparison" (234).

There is a kind of authoritarianism here that places the problematic areas of Pynchon's fiction just beyond reach. It is not that *Gravity's Rainbow* is too long or complex to analyze, but that Pynchon has protected its true core by means of intellect and intellectual performance, much as Eliot did in *The Waste Land*. For Plater final authority is of course the author. Pynchon's cosmic mastermind has supposedly blocked criticism, but that process only occurs when the critic accepts the author's terms as the only genuine ones for discussion. Criticism cannot be said to be wholly responsible if it does not critique the author's concepts along with his characters and plots. By failing to analyze the local, as opposed to the metaphysical, origins of paranoia and uncertainty, by omitting any discussion of humor or Pynchon's remorseless sadism, Plater leaves Pynchon much as he was before the analysis began, with paranoia and systems floating high in the air, out of reach, like the rocket before its fall. This book is cult-criticism, and for all its care and intelligence, it bears the same relation to Pynchon's work as apologetics do to sacred texts.

CHARLES BAXTER

*Wayne State University*

*Escape from the Self* by Karl Malkoff. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977. Pp. xvi + 181. \$12.50.

*Modern American Lyric: Lowell, Berryman, Creeley, and Plath* by Arthur Oberg. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978. Pp. xiv + 182. \$11.00.

*John Berryman: An Introduction to the Poetry* by Joel Conarroe. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977. Pp. xxiv + 215. \$10.95.

*The Poetry of John Berryman* by Gary Q. Arpin. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978. Pp. viii + 111. \$8.95.

One of the features distinguishing "modernist" from "post-modernist" poetry is the attitude that their respective practitioners take toward "personality." As early as Aristotle, the tendency of minds to combine differently in terms of similarity, difference, cause and effect, and contiguity served as a basis for determining personality, and earlier, dialect, vocabulary, idiom, and name offered other insights into character. The very difficulty in separating these elements led critics at the start of the twentieth century to equate personality and style so that one's style was one's personality. Yet, with the advent of Imagism and more clearly with T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), equations of personality and style began to change. For Eliot, great art was "not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality," and in this depersonalization, "art may be said to approach the condition of science." But, Eliot adds, "only those who have personality...know what it means to want to escape from [it]." The "progress of the artist" is, in such terms, an almost

Darwinian "continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality," For Ezra Pound, the process of extinction began "in a book called *Personae*" (1909), with his "casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem." It consisted, as William Carlos Williams was to say in an essay on Marianne Moore (1925), in "wiping soiled words or cutting them clean out, removing the aureoles that have been pasted about them or taking them bodily from greasy contexts."

By 1929, Eliot was recommending to younger poets the "transparency" of Dante's poetry to the "opacity" of Shakespeare's, adding that "the language of each great English poet is his own language; the language of Dante is the perfection of a common language." Yet three years later—perhaps influenced by Niels Bohr's complementarity theory—Eliot is willing to see in Shakespeare's writing the instrument of perception wed inevitably to perception and seemingly incompatible perceptions representative of aspects of truth without necessarily entering into direct conflict. Distinguishing Shakespeare's work from that of lesser writers, Eliot remarks that great poets generate a sense of "one significant, consistent, and developing personality." Certainly, it was the "opacity" of the writer that, by the end of the decade, the younger poets embraced. In "The Two Audens" (1939), Delmore Schwartz viewed the very poetic medium to which the young Eliot would sacrifice personality as an interplay of a writer's Freudian id and ego, and by the early fifties, Charles Olson portrayed it as physiological: "the head, by way of the ear, to the syllable/the heart, by way of the breath, to the line." Whatever the reasons of the "opacity," the choices of the "post-modernist" poets became less those momentary decisions that Søren Kierkegaard identified with art than the life choices he called ethical. As W. D. Snodgrass was to say in 1959, poets of his generation "who had gone so far in criticism and analysis so as not to be able to turn back and be innocent again" were left with the depths of their sincerity: their "only hope as artists" was to ask themselves continually, "Am I writing what I *really* think? . . . What I cannot help thinking?"

Karl Malkoff's *Escape from the Self* and Arthur Oberg's *Modern American Lyric* deal with the wide implications of these attitudes toward "transparency" in art as they come to illustrate a general "shared sense of man's capacity to experience himself and the world." At the same time, Joel Conarroe's *John Berryman: An Introduction to the Poetry* and Gary Q. Arpin's *The Poetry of John Berryman* focus on the implications of willed opacity as it affects the development of a single writer. For Malkoff, "escape from the self" begins with T. E. Hulme's recognition that "our principal concern . . . at the present moment should be the re-establishment of the temper or disposition of mind which can look at a gap or chasm without shuddering." Malkoff connects this recognition to Norman O. Brown's later assertion that "meaning is not in things but in between; in the iridescence, the interplay; in the interconnections; at the intersections, at the crossroads." By the devices of similarity, difference, cause and effect, and contiguity that Aristotle identified with personality, these "gaps" or "betweens" are consciously obscured into a "fixed point of view." Far from being "normal," this fixed point of view is "as much acquired as is the means of recognizing the letters of the alphabet, or of following chrono-



logical narrative." For Brown, Marshall McLuhan, and other contemporaries, including "modernist" poets, man's present task becomes that of ridding "connectives" and allowing things to mean freely by simple placement. Pound's *Cantos* offers "meaning" in a discontinuous flow of placements in the mind of a single individual. Williams' *Paterson* reinterprets this effort toward meaning as communal and centers it on place. Olson's *Maximus* sequence weds both techniques into a space/time continuum.

Malkoff's approach works well for Olson and writers of the Pound-Williams generation, but it begins to founder as it treats Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, and John Berryman. Here, Malkoff's making interchangeable "personality," "self," "ego," and "Freudian ego" crashes against their efforts to escape the tyranny of the Freudian ego for an interplay of id and ego that Freud himself identifies with "personality" and "self." Consequently, their efforts do not quite equate to the attempts of their predecessors to extinguish personality. Rather than a sequence exhibiting Freudian concepts and illustrative of Lowell's belief that, in the collapses of sectarian religion, "Freud seems the only religious teacher," *Life Studies* is seen simplistically as a long poem whose unmediated sections, changes of style, points of view, modes of expression, and contents signal its affinities to Pound's *Cantos*. Plath's "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus," and "Fever 103°" become communal reinterpretations of Lowell's individual testing of boundaries and, in its effort to be an interior version of Olson's space/time continuum, Berryman's *Dream Songs* offers "nothing less than a head-on assault on the notion of a single, consistent personality." Malkoff extends this interest in "transparency" to the writings of Allen Ginsberg, the Black Mountain poets, the New York poets, the Deep Imagists, the New Black poets, A. R. Ammons, and Mark Strand, where, again, cases for complementarities may be made. Malkoff also treats briefly the work of Theodore Roethke, Randall Jarrell, Delmore Schwartz, and Karl Shapiro as attempts to assert rather than escape self. Failing to perceive his own clear "fixed point of view," Malkoff completes his study with an attack on the egoism of certain critical schools and praise for the maverick "escapes" of Walter Ong, David Bleich, Walter Slatoff, and Stanley Fish.

In his study of the contemporary lyric, Oberg is less interested than Malkoff in presenting procrustean overviews. Oberg limits his discussions to the work of only four poets—Lowell, Berryman, Robert Creeley, and Plath—and concentrates on only "the short or compressed poem, the poem likely to express the thoughts and feelings of some 'I,' the song, the love poem." Even here, he seems less interested in the formal elements of lyrics than in their content. In the divorce of the lyric poem from music, he offers none of the standard structuring substitutes: he has recourse neither to the New Critics' belief that lyrics are improvisations on paradoxes or tensions nor to an extension of Arthur Schopenhauer's idea that music closely resembles the rhythm of thought so that, as modern lyrics adhere to the contours of thought, they indirectly approximate music, nor even to the more popular notions among contemporary writers that the formal elements of lyrics are physiological and somehow related to heart-beat or breath or para-linguistic and related to idiolect. Rather, what constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of lyrics for Oberg is their insistent "on ad-

dressing the intimate 'you' in us." In the case of Lowell, this effort is part of a "distinguishing between false styles and true styles, styles that conceal and styles that define." The result is not, as Malkoff suggests, "a poetry of cancellation or absence or silence," but "a poetry which must make and remake itself, again and over again, in order, like the perpetual lover, to get the world right." In a syllogism whose undistributed middle is guaranteed to horrify any logician, Oberg proposes for Lowell that "to live is to change; to live is to love; therefore, to love is to change."

The strength of Oberg's book rests not in its definitions or logic so much as in its descriptive responses to nuance, particularly in the crucial Freudian matters of "love" and "death." Oberg perceives, for example, that Berryman's *Dream Songs* "keep[s] refusing to yield what it is about." The volume leaves an impression that "Berryman is writing a love poem which the piling negatives and hypothetical 'if's' never succeed in overwhelming completely" and where a "counterwill" insists on "an acknowledgment of human need for love: warmth, rest, sustenance, music ('notes'), and light ('sun')." "In his need to love and be loved," Oberg discovers, "Berryman's Henry must confront the limitations of himself as a desiring man," so much so that Berryman "significantly" surrounds love "as a word and as a concept, with quotation marks." In contrast, Creeley's "thinking in words is...radically dramatic and emotive" and "can assume the proportions of a godlike remaking of a world...In ways that refuse to distinguish between literature and jotting, poetry and prose, lyric and pornography," his "intentional strategies" are "to write on behalf of or for love, to make language come true, and to align language with matters of love and self." For Plath, there is a comparable "wish and need to clear a space for love" at the same time her work inclines "to see love as unreal" and fear an inability "to give and receive." Distortions and displacements of love eventually occur, and Oberg interprets the final poems not as "the mystically calm, orderly poems which some critics have seen them to be. Instead, they are the terrible, terrifying creations of a woman who, near the end of a life, still could not do without love, even if she never learned what to do with it."

The combined arguments of Conarroe and Arpin accept an "opacity" for "post-modernism" similar to that of Oberg's study, suggesting in the process the eventual model of most books dealing with John Berryman's work. Differing only in what constitutes Berryman's "supreme" achievement, Conarroe and Arpin view his career as a preface to a major poem. In the case of Conarroe, this poem is *The Dream Songs*; in the case of Arpin, *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*. Berryman then "declines" slightly into *Love & Fame, Delusions, Etc.*, and the posthumously edited *Henry's Fate*. Both critics presume that autobiographical poetry should be "ethical" and, although they duly report Berryman's quarrel with Eliot about "consistent personality" and Berryman's insistence in the "Scholia" to *Love & Fame* that "each of the four movements criticizes backward the preceding, until Part 4 wipes out altogether all earlier presentations," both seem not to understand the aesthetic implications of this "choosing for the moment." Berryman is fighting to preserve the "art sense" of the lyric in the face not only of popular fashion but also of a tradition of ethical lyricism that begins prior to Boethius and extends through Nietzsche into James

Joyce. Berryman may fail in these final books to make his "momentary choices" as attractive as the "momentary choices" that occur in the traditionally "false" narrative worlds of *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* and *The Dream Songs*, but more attention might have been given his effort. In allowing *Berryman's Sonnets* to be printed, he had indicated that his concern was "whether wickedness/was soluble in art," and certainly Auden's recent successes in this area had indicated that a poet might transcend the ethical demands of post-modernism. Jarrell's review of *The Shield of Achilles* describes a high order of religion and meta-morality resulting from a "Conscious and Moral Auden...quite consciously and immorally" letting an "Unconscious Auden" have its play.

Conarroe admits "outright that most of [Berryman's] work of the 1940s (and late 1930s) appeals to [him] primarily because of its relationship to the later books." He finds the work in *Five Young American Poets* (1940) and *Poems* (1942) "utterly unexceptional" and inhibited. In *The Dispossessed* (1948), he singles out only "Canto Amor" and "Nervous Songs" as "major achievements." He finds the lover of *Berryman's Sonnets* "still held in check," although threatening already to burst forth into the "exuberant persona" that will make *The Dream Songs* a masterpiece of "private sorrows." *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* continues to keep this exuberance in check by allowing the work's energy and passion to emerge in the persona of Bradstreet, and in the book's longest and best chapter, he presents his argument for the achievements of *The Dream Songs*. For Conarroe, "the songs represent, as much as anything else, attempts [by Berryman] to get his dreams, memories, and fears out in the open as a means of coming to grips with them, of escaping their tyranny." Conarroe finds the various poems "for the most part" neither "placed in the order in which they were composed nor...organized around any clearly delimited period of time." Nonetheless, unlike Pound's *Cantos* or Williams' *Paterson*, which "could have been continued indefinitely," Conarroe detects a "unity" in that "it is not possible to imagine a reopening of *The Dream Songs* after number 385, so absolute is the sense of closure." He argues, in addition, that the "archaic and Latinate constructions... crumpled syntax, odd diction, idiomatic conversation, and conscious violation of grammatical rules" that comprise Henry's voice are finally "far better suited to the expression of [Berryman's] fears and struggles than...the more impersonal, less consistent mode" that dominates the final volumes.

Arpin is less concerned with the expression of Berryman's individual fears and struggles than with the allusive nature of the writing, arguing that "Berryman was an enormously well-read man," who used the knowledge he gained from reading "both to create a world and to give the effect of a man ransacking our culture in an attempt to find a way of living in that world." He warns those who might put much weight on the autobiographical element in Berryman's work that Berryman's "reading was frequently as important as his experience." In contrast to Conarroe, Arpin sees Berryman's contribution to *Five Young American Poets* as containing "some very fine work." Arpin tends to value more highly, too, the poems of *The Dispossessed*. Arpin is best, however, in his tracing of literary echoes and antecedents in *Berryman's Sonnets*, *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, and *The Dream Songs*. Here echoes of Tristan Corbière, Sir Philip Sidney,

Sigmund Freud, Dante, W. B. Yeats, Anne Bradstreet, Stephen Crane, and others illuminate the "tradition" of poetry which at its worst justifies Jarrell's early complaint that "doing things in a style all its own sometimes seems the primary object of the poem." Arpin prefers *Mistress Bradstreet* to *The Dream Songs* because it is "more coherent" and "more successful," adding that the latter sections of *The Dream Songs* fail to redeem "trivial experiences" and the "unity" of the whole does not prevent "many individual parts...being juggled around without seriously affecting the structure." The late poems Arpin sees attempting "to do with language more than the language will successfully allow." The failures are not of character or individual talent so much as of desperate experimentation—an exhaustion of individual, purposive linguistic possibility.

JEROME MAZZARO

*San Diego State University*