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Book Reviews

Imagination by Mary Warnock. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976. Pp. 213. $13.95.

To tackle a subject such as imagination in barely over two hundred pages certainly takes courage. Mary Warnock has that quality in ample measure, together with shrewd insight, sound judgement and an independent turn of mind. She has written an illuminating and stimulating book.

Fully aware of the rashness of her endeavor, she frankly disclaims in the Preface any pretension to a total coverage of the topic. Rather than as the presentation of a complete theory, *Imagination* is to be regarded as "the record of an experiment" (p. 9), an attempt to trace a single thread, whose connections are conceptual, not causal. Only later does she identify the brand of imagination with which she is concerned as "the romantic version of this concept" (p. 201), conceding that it is indeed not the only version, but the one which is, to her mind, true and fitting to the facts. By and large, however, she does not rely on such common (and often misleading) terms as "romantic" and "rationalistic." Her method of exploring the image-making faculty is along loosely historical lines extending from Hume through Kant, Schelling, Coleridge and Wordsworth, to Husserl, Jaspers, Wittgenstein and her own critique of Sartre.

The investigation centers on four major areas which are associated with particular developmental stages and particular thinkers. The first section, entitled "Imagination and Perception," concentrates on Hume and Kant. Hume, standing in a tradition of empiricist thought that goes back to Locke and Berkeley and even to Descartes, took imagination to play a vital role in our thinking, and defined ideas of the world as images. While Hume envisaged our experiences of objects as essentially serial, Kant introduced the possibility of a synthesizing ordering of the chaos of impressions by making the all-important distinction between the empirical and the transcendental imagination. For both Hume and Kant it is imagination that allows us to go beyond the bare data of sensation and to bridge the gap between mere sensation and intelligible thought. Moving from the cognitive to the creative aspects of imagination, Part II is devoted to "Imagination and Creative Art." Again the focus is on Hume and Kant, with the addition of Schelling. Though Kant, like Hume, regarded the activity of the creative imagination as inexplicable, he nevertheless made a systematic attempt to expound it, and he linked our sense of the sublime with ideas of reason. With Schelling (and Fichte) the climate and tone change as the distinction between legitimate thought and metaphysical speculation is done away with, and the conscious and unconscious workings of the imagination are fused into a unity. So to Part III, a consideration of the theory and practice of Coleridge and Wordsworth, neither of whom were systematic thinkers. Coleridge sought primarily in his excursions into philosophy to find a framework for his thoughts and to establish some metaphysical

foundation for his beliefs. For Wordsworth, as for Coleridge, the imagination was an active power, generated from within, that enables us to see the general in the specific and hence to intuit in the image *qua* symbol a meaning beyond itself. The emotion-laden seeing of the image in the mind's-eye becomes in effect identical with the perception of ultimate truths. Mary Warnock's interpretation of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's theory and practice of imagination as equivalent to a direct cognition of truth helps to account for the cardinal importance of this concept among the Romantics. The fourth section, "The Nature of the Mental Image," goes on to raise the question as to what is actually meant by "image," and what is the connection between images and the imagination. How does the mind discriminate spontaneously between its images and its perceptions? How can a certain appeal to introspection be avoided? How far can we separate thought from seeing, concept-using from sensing? These are the psycho-philosophical questions that are discussed, with reference to the phenomenologists, in a section that is, perhaps inevitabily, more polemical and tentative than the earlier chapters. The brief Conclusion, "Imagination and Education," emphasizes the integral part played in our lives by the daily exercise of various kinds of imagination, and urges the need to educate not solely the intelligence but also the feelings, including taste and sensiblilty, so as to produce people of cultivated imagination, receptive to art and nature.

To summarize with such brevity may perhaps seem unfair to so subtle and complex a book as *Imagination*, but it is the only way to show what channels of thought are explored. The real merit of *Imagination* is two-fold. It stems firstly from the lucidity of the exposition of often complicated, crabbed notions. Mary Warnock is a model of clarity who can handle an argument beautifully, knowing when to offer concrete, even homely, examples as a welcome *terra firma* to a reader who might otherwise flounder in a sea of abstractions. She controls her difficult materials with great skill and firmness, resisting the temptation to digress, to overload and so to blur the essentials. Where necessary she does digress, and she says so, as in her helpful explanation of the phenomenological theory of perception (pp. 142-149). This is an example of her kindly and considerate treatment of the reader for she explains without either assuming prior knowledge or talking down in over-simplifications. It is this above all that will make *Imagination* accessible and valuable (if not easy!) to readers as yet untutored in philosophy. The phrase, "we urgently need to pause and make a determined effort at clarity" (p. 138) is characteristic of her manner. Acknowledging the toughness of her topic, Mary Warnock writes with a rare and appealing blend of modesty and self-assurance.

The second great virtue of *Imagination* lies in its honesty and freshness of approach. Analysis is nicely combined with questioning of accepted positions. In this Mary Warnock is as tactful as in her attitude to the reader; her criticisms are judicious in content and expressed without aggressiveness, but she is not afraid to confront difficulties, to take up a position and to make a judgement. Her treatment of Coleridge is a case in point: she squarely faces the controversial problem of the extent of his indebtedness to German philosophers, proceeds cautiously and pragmatically to examine the evidence of his reading, and his misreadings, and concludes that Coleridge had more enthusiasm

than consistent or detailed understanding of Kant and his successors and that he tended to pick up whatever suited his purposes. This is no startlingly original view; yet it is deduced from an examination of the evidence, it is argued with vigor and conviction, and stated without evasiveness. There is throughout *Imagination* a sound common sense, a mental crispness that is specially welcome—and rare—in a discussion of such an elusive topic.

The book is not without fault, however. The Conclusion above all must be greeted with some reservation. Without impugning the validity of Mary Warnock's pleas for the education of the imagination, I find them strangely inappropriate at that point—matter for some kind of postscript or corollary rather than as a conclusion. The book ends in effect on a preaching note out of keeping with its main exegetical tenor. This also leads to the question of its unity which arouses some unease. There is a thread of continuity in the concept of imagination that is being traced, but it is not always as evident as one might wish. In spite of certain references forwards and backwards, the sections almost seem separate entities. Quite apart from that change of tone at the very end, the extended and passionate treatment of the phenomenologists and the undue concentration on Sartre are unbalancing to the whole. What is more, *Imagination* may well earn disapproval and even scorn from certain academics because it does not regurgitate previous secondary literature and arm itself with the external apparatus of scholarship. Nevertheless Mary Warnock has given us a refreshing and informative study that will be useful to many outside her own field of philosophy.

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Language Truth and Poetry: *Notes towards a Philosophy of Literature* by Graham Dunstan Martin. Edinburgh: At the University Press, 1975. Pp. vii + 354. $14.50.

This often engaging, sometimes irritating, polemical study develops the notion that "the basic struggle (is) between those who admit complexity and uncertainty, and those whose truth is always certain ... and therefore never true" (p. 294). The main object of its attack is the modern crisis of the "two cultures," a crisis toward which we have been developing for the last three centuries, and which poses scientific discourse and its absolute claims to truth-value against poetic discourse with all of its exploitations of the wealth and thus the indeterminacy of language. It defines a model of language usage which, though somewhat equivocally, identifies scientific and poetic discourse and sets both off against linguistic and logical theories which treat language as a tool for creating propositions of absolute truth. As regards the first purpose, Graham Dunstan Martin betrays not a little ambivalence, since he never succeeds in escaping the science-poetry dichotomy that he putatively seeks to cancel. As for the second, this study brings to bear some much needed linguistic and philosophical analysis in the interest of destroying dogmas and

myths piously and uncritically held in both camps. If the book's success is qualified, it remains an important study in a field still cultivated by only a small minority of literary students, that concerning the linguistic and philosophical underpinnings of poetic language.

The book divides into three parts. The first is devoted to developing a coherence rather than a correspondence theory of meaning within an ambiance of concern defined by modern linguistics and theories of meaning. In this section, the most original and enlightening of the book, Martin's main enemies are behaviorists such as Bloomfield and Skinner who insist on treating man's use of language as a strictly passive response to external stimuli. Against behaviorist denials of the mental realm of conceptual thinking, Martin argues a position mainly indebted to structural semantics. This position begins from the semiotic triangle first made popular in Ogden and Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning* and goes on to develop a model of language usage that interrelates word, concept, and referent. This model entails chapters on denotation and connotation, the meaning of proper names, metaphor, and the problems of reference in scientific and poetic discourse.

The second part concerns the similarities and differences between scientific and poetic uses of language and builds on the first part by proposing the ways in which both kinds of discourse construct models of the real world that are essentially metaphoric. Here, Martin's argument should prove immensely gratifying to literary theoreticians who have discovered that the gulf between science and literature canonized by scientists and the new critics alike has ceased to be meaningful. Martin makes much of philosophers of science who have seized on post-Einsteinian relativity to demolish science's claim to absolute truth. Science's essentially tentative use of metaphorical models to make sense of the data of the physical world is defined against the claims of formal logic to reduce language usage to making statements only about empirically verifiable situations. Martin's polemic requires the resuscitation of poetic language by raising it to the status of a scientific usage defined as primarily poetic and metaphorical. Just how successful this realignment is I will examine later on.

The third part includes two chapters that, respectively, defend poetry's cultural and political uses in combating the absolutisms of fascism, communism, and western conservatism and question the ways in which poetry's function of bringing us closer to our world may be perverted into becoming a fantasized substitution for it.

This brief summary does not engage the book's free-wheeling movement over a large range of subjects. Whatever its theoretical shortcomings, doubtless the result of the author's attempt to cover a vast territory in too short a space, it exhibits an impassioned concern for the place of fictive discourse in a culture alternatively dedicated to displacing it in favor of various scientific myths or to lauding it mindlessly. For Martin, literary artifacts are one of modern man's essential weapons against the intellectual and political absolutisms that would freeze human reality into a single closed structure or model:

> I would say . . . that the ability to "imagine" what cannot possibly be true is a *condition of our intelligence*. Were Man not capable of writing fiction, he would not be capable of understanding fact.

> It is true that this capacity lays us open to the dangers of meaningless metaphysics, jejune dogma, religious and political fanaticism; but our incorrect beliefs are the price we have to pay for our correct ones.... The only safeguard here is in fact not to direct our minds narrowly upon a single track of truth—for who can be sure *exactly* where that is?—but to seek the greatest possible flexibility of the imagination. Fiction, drama and poetry are in short a training for the mind, an invaluable exercise in flexibility, a priming for the intelligence.
>
> Their justification is not so much that they "show us truth"; for truth depends not upon the word or the concept but on external fact. It is rather that they allow our minds to contemplate a mass of different possibilities, a mass of might-have-beens and very-nearly-weres. Such flexibility of mind is evidently of practical utility to us, since it allows us to speculate about alternative possibilities. *Fiction allows our minds to play.* (pp. 80-81; emphases in the original)

If none of this is completely original (Northrop Frye has previously argued a similar utility for fictions), its particular cogency derives from a careful analysis of the linguistic and epistemological foundations of poetic language. In this respect we have here a study that is rare enough in the contemporary literature of literary criticism: a justification of literary language that depends upon a close and extended examination of the linguistic, logical, and philosophical underpinnings of language usage in general and of scientific language in particular.

The objections and queries to follow must be understood within the context of my essential agreement both with the book's over-all purposes and with many of its specific points. It has a number of the ingredients of a major study of literary theory; it, however, falls just short of that stature. Since the bulk of the book's innovative comment occurs in its first part, I will concentrate on that, though not exclusively.

The attack in Chapter one on the behaviorist rejection of "mentalist" explanations of language meaning aims at rehabilitating the "concept," which Martin equates with the semantic element of a lexeme (p. 20). As Martin says, "we do not need to know exactly *how* the word is connected to the concept, whether this link is associative or causal, or anything else" (pp. 20-21). Though he mentions Saussure in his bibliography, it seems to me that he might very well have made use of the Saussure-Hjelmslev model of *signifiant-signifié*, since this would apparently have short-circuited the need to take on Skinner and Bloomfield. Within this model "concept" or "semantic features" (*signifié*) would come into existence (for Martin's purposes) not as the result of human mental activity, but rather as a coefficient of a delimited *signifiant* (or word), both of which exist only within a total sign system conceived as a system of differences. In fact, Martin's refusal to make use of contemporary structuralist and semiotic analysis of codes remains puzzling, inasmuch as these would probably have contributed much to his argument.

In Chapter three Martin attacks the attempts of some contemporary linguists to deny meaning, as distinct from reference, to proper names. Martin's argument, which is generally convincing, insists that proper nouns, like class nouns, do in fact connote semantic features, by calling to mind the reference of the name itself, i. e., the person or thing that bears the name. This chapter, like several

others in the book, appears at first somewhat tangential to the main line of the thesis (indeed, more signposting is needed in a book that covers so much ground). It would appear, however, that Martin is attempting to bolster his general contention regarding the dominance of the semantic rather than the referential axis of language, in order to support his later position on the primacy of a coherence rather than a correspondence theory of model usage in both poetry and science.

In his discussion of denotation and connotation in Chapter four, Martin refuses to draw a sharp line between them, but rather describes a spectrum of semantic features moving from an inner core of connotations ("logically criterial connotations") to an outer shell of connotations that the word may suggest. In doing so, he gives too little attention to the fact that, though the distinction between connotation-as-intension (definition) and connotation-as-suggestion may be difficult to draw for any specific word, the distinction remains a necessary a priori schema for classifying different meanings of the same word. He ignores the ways in which metaphorical meanings of words depend upon the assumption of a "violated" literal meaning. No matter how difficult the distinction is to make, somewhere along the line we must and do make a sharp distinction between literal and metaphorical meanings, simply because neither kind of meaning makes any sense except in terms of an opposition between them. Later, Martin will attack scientific discourse to the extent that it seeks to delimit verbal meanings to the denotative, under the impulse to make verbal statements reflect the physical world exhaustively. But surely, the differences between scientific and poetic language are more complex than those founded on "less" and "more" admissible connotations respectively. "Literal" usage must remain, if only heuristically, a foundation of metaphorical meaning—and therefore distinct from it—because metaphor to be recognized as such must present itself as a violation of this literal meaning. Whatever one wants to make of Martin's larger argument about the similiarities between scientific and poetic models of the world—and this is considerable—the argument is not particularly helped by this superficial solution to the problem of what exactly constitutes metaphorical meaning.

Chapter five exploits this putative fluidity in the relations between literal and metaphorical meaning, and here Martin makes one of his major points:

> The structure of every concept is different from that of every other: its content varies from person to person; its extension and intension are both indeterminate; and indeterminacy is a necessary feature of language, to be welcomed moreover because it reflects both the outer world of facts and the inner world of thoughts. Any philosophical or linguistic doctrine which tends to conceal these facts is grossly misleading, and betrays truth in the name of that delusive idol, certainty. (p. 67)

This argument ultimately leads, in the book's second and third parts, to an extended defense of poetic language as the most adequate reflection of the indeterminacy of both the physical world and of our thought about it. In other words, Martin turns the attacks of scientists and philosophers on literary language back on themselves, by pointing out how scientific and philosophical models of the world are only adequate to it when they admit indeterminacy. But

one wonders here, as elsewhere in reading the book, why scientific language is brought in here, particularly when the author launches an attack in part two on scientific language specifically for violating the lessons taught by post-Einsteinian relativity? This is only one of the places where Martin registers a rather equivocal attitude toward the whole poetry-science quarrel that his book is intended to abrogate. It is almost as if he felt the need to make poetry respectable by assimilating it to science and to do this by assimilating science to poetry. He never seems to escape backward glances over his shoulder at the very scientism he wants to avoid. If the science-poetry opposition is Martin's main object of attack, he has allowed science to win some kind of victory here, if only because he takes for granted that scientific claims to absolute truth are something he must continually keep in mind. It has historically been, after all, mainly the scientists who have created this particular quarrel, and literature has always granted science pre-emptive attack by acquiescing in just this way of setting the question. Along comes Martin, then, with an exemplary attempt to get beyond this simple-minded dichotomy, only to mire himself deeper in it through his strenuous attempts to extricate himself and us. In doing so much, however, I must point out that at least he addresses himself to the problem "where it is at" in most people's minds. I could wish that having gone so far, his polemic might have finally destroyed the quarrel once and for all, rather than only drawing an armed peace.

The handling of the problem of reference in Chapter six is exemplary. Martin rightly grasps that science's claims to superior truth-value for its own models is based on a belief that propositions are true by reason of their correspondence to some extra-verbal state of affairs (one remembers with glee Wittgenstein's destruction of his own argument founded on this assumption in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*). Martin argues rather for a coherence theory of truth-value, by which scientific as well as poetic models may claim truth to the extent that the models themselves posit their own criteria of truth. His handling of the "King of France is bald" insolubilium is consequently convincing, when he shows that "language points to a referent even when that referent does not in fact exist" (p. 76).

Despite these strictures and queries, the number of points the book makes ranges over a wide variety of problems that this reviewer finds often intriguing, and I agree with the solutions more often than not.

Martin takes the question of reference in fictions out of the realm of correspondence and places it rightly in the realm of coherence. Thus fictions deal in "constructed referents" (p. 89), which, like "gravitation" and "relativity," are referents which discourse invents in order to make reference to them. The existential world is thus referred to not directly but through the models of that world which poetic discourse constructs. His notion of the "generalizing" function of language likewise contributes a philosophical foundation to an aspect of poetic discourse that we have all recognized more-or-less intuitively. Since the heart of language for Martin is its semantic function, which means its capacity to assign connotations to words, the ability of poetic discourse to represent the complexity and fluidity of the world by collocating words and their connotations in unusual ways receives here a powerful justification. Despite my disagreement with the theoretical foundations of Martin's theory of metaphor

(i. e., he seems unaware of the ways in which we must *unmetaphor* metaphors in order to understand them), his notion that in poetry we are forced into an awareness of the connotations of words, thereby increasing our awareness of the things themselves to which the words refer, takes a traditional point and makes it new.

Finally, his third and last section, on the ways in which literary language remains one of our most potent weapons against political absolutisms, makes a convincing argument for poetry's radically necessary function in a world where political polemics depends very much on people's assumptions that language can refer to "the truth" in a determinate and absolute way. For Martin, the glory at once of the world, of human thought, and of language whether scientific or poetic lies in the irreducible wealth and fluid indeterminacy of the elements which compose all three. If the author has perhaps attempted to argue on too many questions here and to fight on too many fronts, with the consequence that some thrusts fare better than others, this is said to take nothing away from the remarkable achievement of the book as a whole. It marks an important contribution to an area in which literary studies have been too much impoverished: namely, in questioning the theoretical foundations on which writers and readers of poetic fictions have operated, and which they have been too often unwilling to examine. In this respect, the book succeeds and is unequivocally welcome.

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Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture by John G. Cawelti. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. Pp. vii + 335. $15.00.

"'He says plain things in a formal and abstract way, to be sure,'" admits Boswell, half-heartedly defending an author named Harris. "'But his method is good: for to have clear notions upon any subject, we must have recourse to analytick arrangement.'"

"'Sir,'" counters Dr. Johnson, "'it is what every body does, whether they will or no. But sometimes things may be made darker by definition. I see a *cow*. I define her, *Animal quadrupes ruminans cornutum.* But a goat ruminates, and a cow may have no horns. *Cow* is plainer.'"

John G. Cawelti's study of *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* merits both a Johnsonian attack and something a little stronger than Boswell's faint praise. Professor Cawelti does have recourse to analytic arrangement, and he attempts, with mixed results, to apply a Herculean methodology to a still more Herculean task: an aesthetic evaluation and a cultural, or cross-cultural, analysis of related literary forms from *Oedipus Rex* to *The Godfather.* Cawelti's statements on affective issues range from Homer to Bob Hope, and he discusses all of the major literary genres while devoting the book to an analysis of the "popular genres," or "formula" stories of his title. It may jar us to see Rex Morgan,

M. D., practicing alongside Dreiser and Fitzgerald, as in Cawelti's earlier *Apostles of the Self-Made Man*; it may pain us, in this current book, to see Faulkner compared to Irving Wallace. But such comparisons—when, in fact, there are significant thematic and structural parallels—may clarify Faulkner's technique more effectively than the traditional comparisons of Faulkner with Joyce or Hemingway. We recognize Faulkner's use of melodramatic and gothic conventions, but a comparison with the class of writers Cawelti calls "popular melodramatists," whose novels require a steady stream of sensational crises, immediately illustrates Faulkner's more controlled and finely integrated use of such conventions (p. 264). Similarly, the structuralist search for common forms—connecting classical literature not only with popular or folk works, but with oral myth, economic tracts, advertising slogans—attempts to bridge an artificially created gap between "literature" and its cultural context. Indeed, any critic who rejects simple textual explication in favor of historical or cultural or psychological analysis will be interested in what Cawelti tries to do. We need more studies willing to connect folklore and popular literature with traditional literary topics. Cawelti himself modestly disclaims any definitive results for what is in fact an unusually ambitious work, arguing instead that his subject "is significant and complex enough to resist the limited learning and competence of a single individual" (301).

Unfortunately, neither Cawelti's style nor his analytic skill is equal to his intellectual ambition. His writing is generally overwrought, his conclusions hesitant. Here, for example, is the final paragraph of a chapter on "The Art of the Classical Detective Story":

> That modern European and American cultures can produce and enjoy both the straight detective story and its ironic, absurd inversion is either a sign of profound cultural splits and tensions or of rich and diverse creativity or perhaps of both. Whether the classical detective formula will be able to assimilate its antithesis and still generate a new kind of mystery formula remains to be seen. (137-8)

This complex statement of the obvious finishes as a curiously anticlimactic refusal to affirm anything. And such dulling caution combined with unnecessary complexity, often applied to self-evident propositions, is all too characteristic of the book. "Even the most addicted reader of classical detective stories," ventures Cawelti, "probably derives greater pleasure from a first-rate Agatha Christie than from one of her more plodding improvisations" (106). By the insertion of "probably" Cawelti turns tautology into academic parody.

Confusion of terms and a confusing methodology afflict Cawelti in every chapter, perhaps most obviously in the key term of his subtitle. What, exactly, is meant by a "formula"? Cawelti devotes his first chapter to "The Study of Literary Formulas," in which he not only fails to define the term in a clear and consistent way, but also succeeds in introducing a series of still more confusing and overlapping definitions of other terms, like "genre" and "archetype." A "formula" is defined as "a structure of narrative or dramatic conventions" employed in many works (5); it refers "to large plot types" and "story types" that are themselves cross-cultural, if not universal (5-6), and are what some scholars call "archetypes" (6); "formula" is then redefined as "a

combination or synthesis of a number of specific cultural conventions with a more universal story form or archetype" (6) and next becomes "a means of generalizing the characteristics of large groups of individual works from certain combinations of cultural materials and archetypal story patterns" (7). Cawelti admits that "formula" and "genre" may create confusion, since they sometimes mean the same thing, but he uses "formula" to describe what others might term "popular genre," although finally he doesn't think the terms matter so long as "we are clear just what we are talking about and why" (6-7). But by the next page he is obliged to create portmanteau words out of his basic terms in order to sustain an increasingly complex—and confusing—argument. His literary analyses tend to get lost among hyphenated neologisms like "archetype-genre" and "a formula-genre, or what is sometimes more vaguely called a popular genre" (8).

"'I looked into his book,'" Johnson had said of Mr. Harris, "'and thought he did not understand his own system.'" If Cawelti understands *his* system it is only through private definitions of common words, like "stereotype," which Webster defines as "anything repeated or reproduced without variation." Cawelti introduces the term "vitalized stereotype," which is presumably given force by adding "truly" and significance by linking it with the omnipresent "archetype": "The ultimate test of a truly vitalized stereotype is the degree to which it becomes an archetype, thereby transcending its particular cultural moment and maintaining an interest for later generations and other cultures" (11). There is too much mystery here and not enough adventure.

Cawelti's style reflects a confused methodology, and the ambitious scope of the book strains both method and style. "Formula" suffers because it is made to bear the weight of several aims and the meaning of several disciplines, and Cawelti seems to prefer it to "genre" at least in part because he hopes to use it to unite the study of the classical genres, like tragedy and comedy, with the study of "popular genres," like detective fiction or western. He argues against the pejorative meaning of "formulaic," and he apparently employs oxymoronic terms like "vitalized stereotype" in order to endow the concept of "formula" with more positive qualities than mindless repetition and cliché. But he merely succeeds in multiplying categorical dilemmas. What, for example, does "nonformulaic novel" refer to except what the rest of us normally call "literature"? And how does one distinguish between the "formulaic" and "the nonformulaic novel"? His early definitions of formula are so broad that they must apply to any novel. *Crime and Punishment*, he argues, is not a detective novel because it employs "all the basic elements of the detective story" in "a completely different, nonformulaic, arrangement" (133). But it must then be formulaic in other terms: "*Crime and Punishment* is not structured around the inquiry, but around the change in the murderer's soul" (132). Definition becomes a category game—classical and hard-boiled and anti-detective; we lose sight of the possibilities of the form itself and what that form might teach us about an individual work.

Thus Cawelti undermines two fundamental reasons for combining "popular" and "classical" literary categories through formal analysis. For example, having compared the detective story to the modern novel as a whole, he argues:

> Even though superficially similar, the difference between a detective story and the multiple perspectives of a twentieth-century novel remains basic. In the detective story, when we arrive at the detective's solution, we have arrived at the truth, the single right perspective and ordering of events. (89)

This relegates the connections between a popular form and the "serious" modern novel to superficiality, just as it relegates the detective story itself to formulaic oblivion. Using a traditional but limiting view which equates the detective story with rationality, Cawelti spends much of his critical time deciding on admission to an exclusive club of detective writers and neatly disposes (with the aid of Michael Holquist) of clever foreigners like Borges and Robbe-Grillet and Nabokov ("anti-detective"). As a founding father, Wilkie Collins is of course admitted, although *The Moonstone* is a little too clever for its own good, with its "variety of narrators" and "a scale of time and space much larger than the majority of the works that have succeeded it" (134). Cawelti does manage to close the door on *Bleak House*: "the element of investigation of the mystery is so completely subordinated to other narrative interests in this novel that *Bleak House* is no more a detective novel than *Crime and Punishment*" (136). But perhaps *Crime and Punishment* and *Bleak House*, like *The Moonstone*, exploit the possibilities of the detective formula more fully and more imaginatively than the typical versions of the formula that have followed them. Dickens's ability to integrate the detective story with his investigation of Esther's parentage is essential for his control over an immense novel, and a strong case could be made for the centrality of the detective story as a controlling structural device. I am not faulting Cawelti for failing to read Dickens as I would read him, but rather for failing to recognize the significant dimensions of the very form he writes about in such detail. By arbitrarily reducing the detective story to an affirmation of the rational, Cawelti reinforces a limited critical position and helps to minimize the importance of his own subject.

It is precisely this inability to sustain comparisons between "popular" and "serious" works in an illuminating or original way which makes Cawelti's endeavor so disappointing. The more he attempts to combine these categories, the more clearly he reveals the inadequacies of his method. He takes on, for example, the inevitable discussion of *Oedipus* as detective story. Is it or isn't it? He decides against, but adds:

> Despite these differences, there is an important connection between the compelling fascination of the drama of *Oedipus* and the interest of the detective story; both depend on our fascination with the uncovering of hidden guilt or secrets. Some psychoanalysts have theorized that this attraction arises from unresolved infantile feelings about the primal scene leading to an adult compulsion to repeat the experience in the disguise of fantasy. If so, *Oedipus* deals with the primal scene fascination in a more direct and explicit way, while the detective story disguises the experience in symbolic form, as might be expected from a literary type designed primarily for purposes of relaxation and escape. (134)

Everything is wrong with this argument: Cawelti attempts to use psychoanalytic theory without acknowledging it (by the formula: "Some have

said. . . .If so . . .".) and perhaps more importantly, without analyzing its sweeping reductionism in the case. He concludes, peculiarly, that *Oedipus* portrays primal scene material more directly than formula detective stories. Even a casual acquaintance with modern detective stories would contradict this. The solution to James McClure's *Caterpillar Cop* involves a remarkably direct primal scene reconstruction; and an important modern detective writer, like Ross MacDonald, appears to pattern his novels around the discovery of an original parental crime. Cawelti seems to suggest that the direct representation of infantile or sexual material is related to artistic success or originality while a more symbolic representation of such material is characteristic of escape fiction. This would make Spillane a more "symbolic" writer than Sophocles and cast a new, if confusing, light on pornography. Finally, we must wonder about the critical terms themselves. What exactly makes one work more explicit and direct than another, what constitutes "disguise" or disguising "in symbolic form"? Throughout this book there are vague conjecturings about affective issues, but a noticeable failure to use the theoretical constructs of psychological critics like Norman Holland or Simon Lesser, beyond a mention of their work in the bibliography. In his discussion of *Oedipus* we see again the unfortunate formula of Cawelti's own criticism: vague terms and vague style betray a shaky methodology and result in a failure to make significant connections between the widely different materials studied.

The scope of this book alone should still command the interest of anyone working with popular fictional forms or with major writers who make use of popular forms. In addition, many of Cawelti's close readings of specific popular writers and sub-genres, like the "police procedural," are illuminating precisely because they have escaped the larger methodological and stylistic limitations of the work as a whole. Historical parallels, such as the connection made between Spillane's work and the temperance novel, are startling and valuable. And Cawelti's enthusiasm for such a range of material does break through the encrusted surface of his prose. But, like too many of his concepts and like the larger aims of this ambitious work, the whole tends to be made darker by definition.

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George Crabbe's Poetry by Peter New. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976. Pp. 248. $16.95.

George Crabbe (1754-1832) wrote early imitations of Spenser, Raleigh, Cowley, pre-Romantics, and came, much later, to admire Wordsworth, "whom I read & laughed at till I caught a touch of his disease," but even those who see Wordsworthian, Shelleyan, and Keatsian traits in the later work of this last master of the heroic couplet agree that his large poetic output, including certain religious, philosophical, and aesthetic attitudes embodied in it, was well rooted in the 18th Century. Just how independent of those roots his opinions, sensibilities, technique, even his couplets became as his poetry rose into full

flower in the first two decades of the 19th Century is one of the problems, among quite a few this unique poet poses, has always posed. Whether he will forever pose it and others might depend upon how many more studies of the scope or skill of Peter New's *George Crabbe's Poetry* (St. Martin's Press, 1976) the future provides. Mr. New's book has not laid all those problems to rest, nor does he pretend it has done so. Crabbe is too great, complex, and prolific for that. New's study is the latest, not perhaps the most readable but, I think, the best in an enlarging body of criticism that tries to justify the ways of Crabbe to modern man: by placing him comprehensibly in one or another main stream in English literature and then by demonstrating that his achievement so transcends his time that he has become, in Leavis's teasing tribute, "a living classic"—the phrase wherewith New launches the first page of his eight-chapter book.

Even Pollard's 485-page anthology *Crabbe: the Critical Heritage* (1972), since it reprints no criticism after 1890, can give but a faint notion, in its introduction, of the accumulating body of favorable criticism of Crabbe in the intervening eighty-five years. Of the dozen book-length studies published on Crabbe (two in German, one in Russian), four of the better ones have appeared within the last two decades, during which a new biography and four selections of his poems (three of them instructively edited) have also appeared, as well as important chapters on him in several books on larger subjects, and many articles. Dust jacket blurbs, like the trade-names of many other commercial products, often announce that we shall find within precisely what it is the product turns out to lack. Not so of the chief claim composed for New: "no book previously published on Crabbe has analyzed in detail such a wide range of his poetry or offered such a complete assessment of his literary achievement."

This rich, dense study surpasses others, first, in bulk (Huchon's heavily biographical 561-page tome of 1907 is a critical lightweight), for it is thrice the length of Haddakin's *Poetry of Crabbe* (1955), twice that of Sigworth's *Nature's Sternest Poet* (1965) or my own *George Crabbe* (1965). New's procedure, too, has an advantage that with a poet like Crabbe only bulk can handle. Unlike Haddakin's and Sigworth's, his basic approach—though he adopts other devices intended to give his book unity and prevent tiresomeness—is chronological examination of the canon. After a somewhat formidable opening chapter, erudite, rather intricately argued, on Crabbe's assumptions, feelings, intentions, and accomplishments as well as his position vis à vis the Augustans he sprang from, the Romantics he survived, and the Victorian novelists he influenced, New turns to Crabbe's earliest published poem, the "Inebriety" of 1775, and concludes, nearly two hundred pages later, with the last of the *Posthumous Tales* (1834) he chooses to discuss. What he considers the several dozen best or most revealing of Crabbe's many dozens of character sketches and tales he submits to careful *explications de texte*, analyses that can run to over 3000 words each. He tries also to sustain, obliquely or indirectly, a running treatment of half a dozen theses, most introduced in the first chapter. All are significant though not all are original, and he handles them interestingly though not with equal success.

The book's solidity, therefore, and its occasional brilliance, lies more in those well-wrought explications. With a kind of ambidexterity New presents analyses sufficiently arresting to maintain the interest of the reader familiar with Crabbe's

poems while insinuating sufficient narrative exposition to satisfy the needs of the reader who is not—the conscientious reader, for New's tight prose demands unflagging attention. His discussions of the well-known "Peter Grimes" (*Borough*, XXII), for example, and the little-known "Edward Shore" (*Tales*, XI) are both subtle and clear. Occasionally he forgets—or perhaps just fails. His handling of "The Confidant" (*Tales*, XVI) could well bewilder the novice and may stand, too, as an example of something rare but more serious, actual misreading or oversight. That the blackmailed wife was once not only indiscreet but in consequence became the mother of a "fatherless" child is vital to a full appreciation of just those ironies of diction, situation, and character relationships that New's ear and mind seem so good at catching in Crabbe's sophisticated verse.

One does wish, though, that some of these long analyses were more obviously joined to the book as a whole, to its running thematic strands, than they seem to be. Surely, however, they come to support well three of New's declarations, none wholly original but none hitherto so systematically approached: that Crabbe is the greatest short-narrative poet in English since Chaucer, that he surpasses the 18th-Century novel "in the range of contemporary moral and social attitudes he has dramatized," whereby he is joined only by Chaucer and Shakespeare and "some of the major novelists of the nineteenth century," and that Crabbe *may* be (here, as a last-page surprise, New hedges a little) a major rather than a minor poet. John Speirs in his *Poetry into Novel* (1971) had "inclined to see" *The Prelude*, *Don Juan*, and Crabbe's 1812 *Tales* "as the most solid of the larger-scale achievements" of 19th-Century English poetry. New refers four times to Speirs's chapter on Crabbe, but the final estimate of his much larger survey is clearly more cautious, though not less persuasive.

Most readers of *George Crabbe's Poetry* would, I think, have appreciated a descriptive bibliography of the many manuscripts, scattered among many collections, that New makes frequent and skillful use of, and some of its readers would feel, I suspect, more comfortable had New given more frequent credits to previous studies of Crabbe. He often seems to present as discovery what is restatement. But he as often reworks old material freshly. Among several aspects of Crabbe that New handles at length while acknowedging that others have done so, he probably puts to best use two platitudes—one, that Crabbe is much preoccupied with how human character changes in time, sometimes for the better, more often for the worse ("contaminate" is one of New's favorite words); the other, that Crabbe's descriptions are sometimes distinctly reminiscent of Hogarth. New fuses these commonplaces into a sound and most handy conception of Crabbe's gradually sophisticating development of a "progress form" which the poet composes many variations of, in shape and procedure, but which he also occasionally "escaped" altogether, with striking results. Another perception—this time profound and, I believe, original—that helps give New's book some degree of that variety and coherence that Haddakin rightly feared a chronological approach might preclude is the extent to which Crabbe wrestled in his tales with paradoxes of time and freedom and their interrelationships. And although the first chapter's attempt to convince us right off may be over-subtle and under-supported, New is right in pairing Johnson with Pope (who earns, in fact, but one-third as many entries in the index) as a

major influence on Crabbe, possibly the greater of the two. Considering, however, his vision of Crabbe's achievement as occupying a definable stage in the great narrative sweep from Shakespeare via Johnson to Dickens and Eliot, I find it at the least misleading that New not only fails to make a precise acknowledgement to Speirs's related verdict but to omit any reference to such pioneering work towards the development of that vision as W. K. Brown's *The Triumph of Form* (1948) or "The Development of Crabbe's Narrative Art" (1947) by Arthur Sale, one of whose comparisons, that between Catherine Lloyd of the *The Parish Register* and Dinah of "Procrastination" (*Tales*, IV), New handles too and to the same ends—if he doesn't know this important article by a scholar at his own alma mater, he ought to.

Or is this quibbling along Germanic-American lines from which the more cavalier breed of English critic is by tradition exempt? Although observing that not all of New is new, I must point out that the fact itself is inevitable in so comprehensive a survey, that New does have many new things to say about Crabbe, and that when he comes to an independent judgment in disagreement with general opinion or a particular predecessor he does so without a hint of ridicule or self-congratulation. And true to its title, *George Crabbe's Poetry* tells us rather little about Crabbe as a man but a great deal, more than anyone else alone has done, about Crabbe as a craftsman.

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The Romantic Sublime: *Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* by Thomas Weiskel. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. Pp. xi + 220. $12.00.

Can we still be interested in the *sublime*? Is the word too encrusted with hollow pedantry or soiled beyond recovery for serious discourse? The critic, like the poet, keeps purifying the dialect of the tribe, but whose dialect, of what tribe, grows ever more mysterious. The reclamation of any word seems a brawny task these days and the saving of the sublime more difficult than most.

The late Thomas Weiskel, whose promising career was cut short by a tragic accident in 1974, performed a major feat of verbal rescue in *The Romantic Sublime*: *Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. Weiskel affirms the central issue: "We should like to determine what in the Romantic ideology has residual power, what we still share." Weiskel goes a long way in showing what power still resides in the concept of the sublime using his wide-ranging skills in literary history, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and old fashioned explication to dust off the moribund old word until it shines again. He is not rewriting or supplanting S. H. Monk's classic study on which any new student of the sublime must necessarily depend, but Monk's book is forty years old and we need to know where the sublime stands now. Harold Bloom teases us with an interesting but undeveloped theory of the sublime in *Poetry and Repression* (1976) but Weiskel's book is wholly centered there, and if he does

not work out a wholly coherent or convincing theory of the sublime, he points the way toward one. But first we must step back. What is the sublime and where does it come from?

The word itself means "below the threshold" but of course it has always been the *release* from that point upward to some form of transcendence that has fascinated sublimists. Longinus, who started it all in the first century, can no longer interest us as a writer on rhetoric—if he ever could—but there are three places in *Peri Hypsous* that can still attract us, I think. Longinus emphasizes the "transport" induced by elevated language and sees this state leading to the beautiful illusion of a self-hypnotic experience in which the soul believes in the sublime "and is filled with joy and vaunting, as though it itself has produced what it has heard." The transport in which one sublimes oneself leads finally near to Godhead because "in discourse we demand that which transcends the human." Edmund Burke and Kant, the leading analysts of the sublime in the eighteenth century, do not go this far. Burke, who makes but slight mention of Longinus, focuses the source of the sublime on terror but is not interested in transcendence. He maps the sublime by studying those "ideas" which make it up: obscurity, power, privation, vastness, infinity, difficulty, and magnificence. These states are handled precisely and daringly by Burke in his famous *Enquiry* which anticipates the Romantic sublime, especially as it is manifested in Wordsworth, but he is not interested in anything beyond the human; the highly empirical Burke insists that "when we go one step beyond the sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth." Burke's subtle discovery of *delight*, not pleasure, in terror might have led to a possibly transcendent psychology, but it did not. Burke remains firmly analytical in his approach to the emotions and is not, argues Weiskel, like Kant an "apologist for the sublime." Kant, with whom Weiskel struggles mightily, is still, I think, the profoundest analyst of the sublime although he hardly leaves any room for sublimity in the object. For Kant, "the sublime is what pleases immediately in opposition to the interest of sense." This Negative or Kantean sublime finally allows us to discount everything, including our life, as Weiskel irritably argues. Kant characterizes the experience of the sublime as a sudden powerlessness followed by a reactive inflation in which we discover the grandeur of the ideas of reason in the mind. The limitlessness of the sublime object and the imagination's incapacity to represent it proves that the sublime cannot be found in nature but only in the subject, in ideas of reason. The sublime is therefore, as the beautiful is not, wholly subjective. Kant divides the sublime into two types: the *mathematical*, what Weiskel calls the *on and on*, in which we discover a limitless magnitude from which our reason finally demands a whole, and the *dynamical* sublime in which we confront the might of nature which finally cannot hurt us because it rouses our faculties to their own "vaunting" as Longinus called it. The contemporary mind might wish to call this reaction-formation, and Bloom and others have shown the importance of anxiety in the making of the sublime. To Thomas Weiskel Kant's sublime is melancholic and solipsistic and cannot help us find a way back to "our life." He wants to save something of the sublime for himself and for the reading of Romantic poetry.

The opening sentence of *The Romantic Sublime* seems startling, although it has its source in Longinus: "The essential claim of the sublime is that man can,

in feeling and in speech, transcend the human." I think this idea is not consistently developed in the book because the author is uneasy about leaving the human behind; but this very unease is complex and stimulating in its working out. Weiskel offers both a theory of the sublime and an application of it to particular authors. That the two do not always conflate need not disturb us because the author refuses to be held in his categories if they will not fit a sensitive reading. Briefly, he grounds his theory on what he calls the sublime moment which develops in three phases: (1) in which the mind stands in a determinate relation to the object in the linearity of normal perception, (2) in which the mind-object relation breaks down in an excess of the signified (the object) or the signifier (the mind) as in Wordsworth where Weiskel precisely says, "the object is always in danger of precipitant attentuation," and (3) a "reactive" phase in which the disturbance of phase two is taken "as symbolizing the mind's relation to a transcendent order." This third phase is thinly described but Weiskel informs us brilliantly about phase two, which is, of course, apocalyptic in its nature. Adapting both Burke and Kant and much else from current disciplines, Weiskel himself offers two types of the sublime, one that is negative or metaphorical and one that is positive or metonymical; in the negative sublime the breakdown of phase two is resolved by substitution whereas, in the positive sublime, the mind recovers by "displacing its excess of signified into a dimension of contiguity which may be spatial or temporal." As I feel that the account of transcendence is inadequate or tentative in the book, so too the positive sublime, which the author associates with the assertion of identity in the egotistical sublime, is somewhat lacking in detail. The negative or metaphorical or reader's sublime points to vacancy and loss; the positive or metonymical or poet's sublime is apparently *this* life-enhancing and the author prefers it. But Weiskel's brilliantly compact examination of carefully chosen Romantic texts may make us wonder what the positive sublime is and where it can be found. What can this formula for the Romantic sublime tell us about Romantic poetry?

It is not Weiskel's intention to classify Romantic poets in terms of the positive and negative sublime because, he says, such a symmetry would be false to poetic texts which may manifest both structures. Yet I think he tends to do just that: Wordsworth manifests and fights against the negative sublime; Shelley reaches for the positive sublime but flees from the recognition of identity it implies; Keats's notion of the egotistical sublime is a manifestation of the positive sublime through which Keats must pass, etc. Blake, to whom Weiskel devotes an uneasy but brilliant chapter, is seen as an opponent of the Romantic sublime because the sublime threatens the autonomy of the imagination. An ingenious reading of Urizen's expulsion of Ahania in Night Three of *The Four Zoas* sees Urizen as a kind of Kantean reason casting out his wholeness for the sake of a destructive arrogation of the negative sublime: "Blake locates ruin in precisely the same mental event that Kant would celebrate." Yet Weiskel is not a Blakist; he asks for a new exoteric reading of Blake and confesses that, despite the enormous commentary of recent years, Blake is not getting easier to read. I would also point out that Blake owes much to the theory of the sublime as Morton Paley proved in *Energy and the Imagination.* "The Tiger" is nothing if not a sublime poem, and the artists who influenced

Blake, Barry, Fuseli, Mortimer, etc., worked in the sublime manner. I think Blake belongs somewhere in any study of the sublime, and not simply as an ironist. Blake as sublimist needs further study and I'm sure he'll get it.

Weiskel's chapter on William Collins demonstrates his subtle explicative talent and his skill in using Freud in non-reductive readings of the "Ode to Fear" and the "Ode on the Poetical Character." His concern with the "careers of egos within poems" is fully represented in his treatment of this vexing poet of the still unclarified Age of Sensibility—in fact, these are some of the best pages on Collins I know, a poet whom everyone has wished to be better than he is. Weiskel concentrates on the relation between Romance and the negative sublime in Collins whose "I" is neither equal to the full self-consciousness of the major Romantic poet nor to a realistic poetry of earth. "When an I becomes self-conscious it requires an identity or convention of self-dramatization and Collins's is often not adequate to this self-consciousness." Milton, of course, shadows Collins who, according to Weiskel, would escape from him into the Romantic sublime but is unable to do so. Collins's search for authority poises him unhappily on the edge of Romance in a phallic anxiety that is not sublimated, or perhaps more accurately, repressed into the sublime, repression being, as Harold Bloom understands it, precisely that mechanism that releases the sublime by its own hyperbolical defence of itself. Weiskel is not saying that Collins is not a threshold poet, as we have known, but the perils and defeats of his stance have never been described more exactly. Romance becomes family romance which becomes the yearning for transcendence.

Using his model of the sublime, Thomas Weiskel darts brilliantly, but with uneven success, at other major Romantic poets. I find his picture of Keats conventional, his use of Wallace Stevens rather *de rigueur*, his omission of Byron unfortunate, and his treatment of Coleridge too sketchy. His critical theory serves him best with Wordsworth and Shelley, even though his equation of the positive sublime with the egotistical sublime leaves something to be desired. One wishes there were more pages on Shelley because the author's brief formulations about that poet are original and incisive. Shelley is observed correctly as the poet of desire least capable of sublimation who, nonetheless, seeks identity on the Wordsworthian model—an intriguing idea for the reading of *The Triumph of Life* which Weiskel ignores except for calling attention to its "pathos of desire." Perhaps Weiskel is correct in arguing that "all roads in the positive sublime lead to identity" but he is also right to see Shelley's flight from identity and Wordsworth's aquisition of it through a near cataclysmic confrontation with the negative sublime. "Shelley's resistance to sublimation was such that he could not welcome identity as a saving project but identity was no less inevitable for all that." This is acute but too compact. A good reading of *Alastor* and a teasing one of *Epipsychidion's* climax do not give us sufficient texts for our perception of Shelley's psychic situation, and I'm puzzled why the most transcendent and certainly most sublime of Shelley's poems is not examined. *Adonais* surely aspires to divination and some form of godding seems essential to any kind of the sublime. The author suggests ingeniously that the rejection of the curse in *Prometheus Unbound* is *extorted* from Shelley "whose deepest defense remains denial." One would have liked to see that startling view developed further.

If Shelley is the poet of the myth of desire, Wordsworth is the poet of the

myth of memory. But Weiskel shows that because desire has no end and memory no origin, "identity can never be completely accomplished." This mournful conclusion gives us a Wordsworth whom Weiskel presents with profound originality—the most important extension of Geoffrey Hartman since *Wordsworth's Poetry* twelve years ago. I think *The Romantic Sublime* is at its best on Wordsworth even though Weiskel seems to change his mind on whether Wordsworth belongs to the negative or positive sublime. He wants to align Wordsworth with the positive but his exciting readings of the famous epiphanic moments in *The Prelude* and elsewhere seem to me to point to Burke and Kant, and not to "the dimension of contiguity" at all. After the early pages of the book offer subtle readings of "Resolution and Independence," *Tintern Abbey* and other poems, the last chapter, "Wordsworth and the Defile of the Word" does not hesitate to swing into those problematic depths where many have trudged before. What does Weiskel, with his background of the sublime, add to Hartman's unsurpassed reading of the Alpine crossing? He adds nothing directly to Hartman's view of the usurping imagination in Book 6 because he accepts it—Hartman argues that Wordsworth discovers the Imagination but calls it nature—and goes on from there to examine the "symbolic order of Eternity" in the poem. He argues that the lines which discover the "Characters of the Great Apocalypse" (621-640) manifest the negative sublime while the earlier great passage about the "unfathered vapour" (592-617) shows the positive sublime. These are polarities that do not interfuse, but exist, side by side, both sublime. If you think, as this reviewer does, that the sublime always depends upon a negativity, you will not see these famous passages as polarities, but the author's brilliant readings of other cruces in *The Prelude* help him make his case. He is superb on the dream about the Arab in Book 5 ("Poetry is not threatened *by* apocalypse, but itself *is* the apocalypse"); the girl ascending the mountain in Book 12 demonstrates the poet's own fear of and flight from signification; the Sarum plain lines in Book 12 (not often considered) are examined in the light of the poet's sacrifice of himself to attain the poetic power he both feels and frightens himself with. I am not suggesting these are final readings but they do suggest what we should know: a great poem is inexhaustible to interpretation and will forever call forth its best exegetes.

If Thomas Weiskel had lived, he might have pondered two problems his book leaves unresolved. I am not happy with his account of sublimation about which he admits we have insufficient data; he sometimes seems to confuse sublimation with repression. Secondly, Weiskel's account of transcendence seems without content. If the Longinian model of the sublime, which he develops with great subtlety and never really abandons, claims to transcend the human then some description of divination would seem to be forthcoming. He dismisses Nietzsche's sublime too easily: "heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic"; I would also suggest that the Nietzschean Overman or clown of God was one way the Romantic sublime was going and continues to go. The ritualistic identification with a mystery god that D. H. Lawrence enacted in his later career might offer us another model of the continuing sublime. But we have enough to be both exhilarated and saddened by this book.

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F. O. Matthiessen: The Critical Achievement by Giles Gunn. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1975. Pp. xxv + 210. $9.50.

Twenty-six years after the tragic death of F. O. Matthiessen, the first book-length review of the accomplishments of this provocative critic has finally been completed. Long overdue was a study of the theories, visions and conflicts of this pioneer of American literature whose probing scholarship determined new guidelines for literary criticism. Summarizing more than he analyzes Matthiessen's ideas about literature, criticism and life, Gunn compassionately etches a picture of the "man within [his] work" (xviii), steadily searching to read not only cultural history through its traditions but the present through its illumination of the past. Matthiessen's life, ideas and their interrelatedness, particularly his key sources for viewing literature through Christianity, democracy and tragedy are neatly woven to give a complete picture of a man secure, for the most part, in his scholarship, though torn by the cultural deterioration of America and a war-stained world. This sympathetic picture of the relation "between what Matthiessen thought and wrote and who he was" (xviii) is delivered in a polished style of admiration that elucidates its subject's strengths and accomplishments. The major drawback to Gunn's book, however, is the extensive summary of Matthiessen's major ideas and opinions, particularly those found in *American Renaissance*, with few discerning objections to his more pertinent yet debatable theories and observations. His underlining of the significant influences upon Matthiessen's life and work are superbly rendered, though too much of this information sometimes becomes repetitious. An examination of Eliot's and James's impact upon Matthiessen could have drawn sharper lines regarding what was assimilated and original in Matthiessen's early thinking, even though these writers did seem to have dominated much of his general perspective almost from the beginning. Still, any scholar not familiar with Matthiessen, particularly his masterpiece *American Renaissance*, should become acquainted with this Harvard scholar's unique view of life and literature. For one already knowledgeable of any of Matthiessen's nine books, *F. O. Matthiessen: The Critical Achievement* will further enhance one's appreciation of the force of his demanding character in striving for form, truthfulness and integrity, not only in his work but in his life as well.

The structure of the book is built upon extensive summary, moderate commentary and compelling glimpses of biography, including an introduction to Matthiessen's accomplishments and character. A conclusion on "The Nature and Quality of Matthiessen's Achievement" completes the work in which Matthiessen's "commitment to imagination...and balance" as well as his "catholicity of taste" in examining an artist's language (184-85) are underscored by Gunn. It was Matthiessen's "constant modulation of perception and judgment" which Gunn especially appreciates and thus has as one of the book's recurring themes Matthiessen's "obligation to the text itself and to the necessity of recovering it for contemporary appropriation..." (186). Of Gunn's admiration for Mathiessen there can be little doubt. His familiarity with Mathiessen's texts and ideas exhibits a respect not only for his subject's scope in his literary approach to different authors' works, but equally for his digressions into such fields as economic theory, epistemology, open-air painting, ethics,

oratory, epic tradition, folklore, Calvinism, classicism, Zoroastrianism and the Bible. "Other critics might be more learned, more sophisticated, or more polished," reflects Gunn, "but few were so wise, so capacious, or so sensitive in registering their own divided responses to the work before them" (187).

Because so much of *F. O. Matthiessen* is an enumeration of Matthiessen's theories and how they "emerge(d) in and shape(d) the course of his published writing" (xviii), it is difficult not to talk about Matthiessen, to some extent, in discussing this book. Turning to the text then and its opening chapter, the early critical influences from which Matthiessen later viewed his own literary scholarship are sketched, in a style exacting and crisp throughout, where Matthiessen is observed in the literary mainstream alongside such critics as Cleanth Brooks, M. H. Abrams, H. L. Mencken and Lewis Mumford. It is from these men that he drew many of his ideas, while reacting to what he considered an often narrow historical and biographical scholarship. Particularly influential was Vernon L. Parrington who, like Matthiessen, desired to find a "usable past" from which to measure man's unspent potential (for obviously differing reasons), although it was to Van Wyck Brooks that the phrase "owed its popular expression" (17). Matthiessen's indebtedness to Brooks for his contribution to the revival of American literature is likewise observed in his gratitude to Eliot's *The Sacred Wood*, a book from which he borrowed and assimilated so many of his notions regarding theory and criticism. In his attempt to close the gap between the literary historian who regards his work as "primarily aesthetic and literary" and others like Frederick Turner and Henry Adams, whose material was essentially "political, social and economical" (4), Matthiessen looked to Eliot, as well as to Henry James, for an understanding in translating "social and cultural issues" into "questions of form and technique" (27).

After clearly establishing James and Eliot rather than Poe or Coleridge (two of Matthiessen's other favorites) as providing the "strongest counterweight to Matthiessen's interest in social and cultural criticism" (26), Gunn studies in the following chapter Matthiessen's three early works: *Translation: An Elizabethan Art*, *Sarah Orne Jewett* and *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry*. One of the better chapters in the book, "From the Art of Translation to the Achievement of Criticism," is strong for its solid analysis of each individual work, particularly Gunn's discussion of Matthiessen's distant relation, Sarah Jewett. Although Gunn remarks that these three works as a whole "did not exhibit at the outset of his career the mature critical grasp he was later to display in *American Renaissance*," they still evidenced hints and ideas upon which Matthiessen would mold his later thoughts. In *Translation* and *Sarah Orne Jewett* for instance, it was his purpose to display how literary art could reveal "important insights into the kind of personal and cultural history which that art might be said to mirror and help us repossess" (38). What makes Gunn's analysis of the latter work most compelling, however, is his ability to see into Matthiessen's emotional and intellectual weakness and to draw them with keen objectivity. Noting Matthiessen's forsaking of the "discriminations of criticism" (38) in *Sarah Orne Jewett*, Gunn perceives here, as well as in the remainder of the chapter, what he fails to do in his examination of *American Renaissance*, which was to critically address himself to the nature of art as well as to the responsibilities of the critic. Though questions are

raised in this section, Gunn's later unwillingness to debate Matthiessen's notions of criticism's function and objectives is presently neglected in order to examine his subject more as an apprentice than as an intrinsic critic. In his examination of *T. S. Eliot*, Gunn details in an enthusiastic manner many of Eliot's major ideas wich unfortunately reappear once too often in the book. Nonetheless, it was essential that he details the main tenets of Eliot's philosophies, for these were the concepts that Matthiessen was later to adopt as his own. Such ideas, however, particularly Eliot's view of the organic relation among the "past, present, and perennial" (51), Gunn aptly remarks, would not attain full mature expression until his *American Renaissance* was completed.

It would not be until the book's publication in 1941 then, along with the increase of European fascism and the breakdown of the American Popular Front, that Matthiessen would become determined in *American Renaissance* to provide "a distinctively American tradition founded upon liberal and democratic impulses..." (70). By seeking to place the works of five major writers, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman, not only in their time but in ours as well, Matthiessen found what he believed to be a common bond among them, especially in their shared devotion to democracy and their attraction to organicism. However, by the third chapter Gunn's scholarly observances seem to falter slightly in his remarks on organic theory. Even with his awareness of Matthiessen's own temptations "to close too quickly the gap between the factual and the ideal, between what was really there in these writers as opposed to what he hoped to find" (133-34), Gunn still prefers to overlook Matthiessen's shortcomings in this section on the "'American Renaissance' and Organic Form." Because this term is so expansive and general in its many meanings, Gunn, in his discussion of Thoreau and organicism (the reconciliation of the one with the many, the individual society, appearance with reality) does not clearly distinguish between Thoreau's organic prose and his perceptions. A writer's manner of expression is not necessarily at one with his vision, as is frequently the case with Melville.

Thoreau's greater success in reconciling the finite with the infinite is appreciated by Matthiessen, though his slighting of Thoreau's sense of evil while offering stronger recognition to Hawthorne for his understanding of good and evil is overlooked by Gunn. Even granting Matthiessen's basis for viewing Hawthrone as the more significant writer for this observation (including his more fully developed modes of experience and expression) does not necessarily set him in the category of an organicist like Whitman or Thoreau, unless particularly similar grounds are drawn. The term *organicism* in Matthiessen's writings has become too encompassing, too over-compensating, and thus too broadened for a solid basis of comparison. Therefore, the expansive strengths of all five writers, the varied differences in their organic practices, and the successes of their imaginative reconciliations of natural forces through their art still need further comment and assessment.

Gunn is similarly lax in the chapter, "'American Renaissance' and the Possibility of Democratic Christianity" in which he essentially summarizes Matthiessen's discussion of Hawthorne's and Melville's treatments of tragedy as democratic and Christian. It is not Matthiessen's treatment of tragedy in the Christian tradition with which I have any quarrel. Rather, it is his discussion

of the myth of the common man and democracy as they relate to Hawthorne which I feel becomes strained. Though Gunn remarks upon this in one of Matthiessen's references to Hawthrone and his " sympathy " toward the common man, he fails to expound upon this tenuous argument from which Matthiessen hoped to support his claim.

Yet, this oversight might be excused for the sharpened reflections Gunn draws near the end of this chapter. Before numbering some of Matthiessen's critical faults, Gunn comes to the defense of his subject, a man whose optimism and aspirations during his lifetime were oftentime targets for cruel reviewers and heated public opinion. In defense of Matthiessen's liberal and democratic impulses, Gunn forcefully addresses his comments to the modern literary reader by noting: "...more than thirty years after the publication of *American Renaissance*, we may well ask ourselves if Matthiessen's hopes were not exaggerated....Indeed, if anything, we now seem to have become even more insensible to those 'undiminished resources' than we were in 1941, and this is nowhere more vividly exhibited than in the way we have revised Matthiessen's readings of the mid-nineteenth-century writers, substituting for them interpretations that often evince comparatively little feeling for the kind of usable potential Matthiessen found in them" (131).

The remaining two chapters deal with Matthiessen's work on James and Theodore Dreiser and include some revealing comments from Matthiessen's *From the Heart of Europe*. Following this in the conclusion is a short appraisal of Matthiessen's achievements, both with the aforementioned major writers and minor writers like Katherine Porter, as well as regionalists such as Willa Cather. Gunn's examination of *Henry James: The Major Phase*, a work which helped to begin the James revival, and *Theodore Dreiser* enumerates the significance Matthiessen brought to bear upon their works, while Gunn meanwhile weaves bits of pertinent biography, suggestive of reasons for Matthiessen's suicide. It is his occasional offering of personal data which greatly enhances this work and gives it an added emotional appeal. While the book's intent is not to be biographical, the book's subject, as well as its reader, requires some background to Matthiessen's aspirations, hopes and frustrations. In completing his final sections (including a Matthiessen bibliography), it was unfortunate that Gunn did so little with the comment he paraphrases from Henry Nash Smith, who confided in Gunn that *American Renaissance* was more a work of art than a work of scholarship, " and that its conclusions, like its method of approach, were more a product of will and aspiration and brilliant intuition than of hard evidence and meticulous reasoning" (134). These comments, without question, could apply to many of Matthiessen's works, writings which sometimes seem more like " a poem" (Nash's term) than a cohesive, academic whole.

Matthiessen's ultimate breakdown in literary achievement, however, occurred in *Theodore Drieiser*, which though hardly " a poem " still offered Gunn one of his more insightful moments in relating Matthiessen's weaknesses and strengths to his literary achievements and failures. By the time he began his work on Dreiser, Gunn notes, Matthiessen had not only become very anxious over America's destiny, but had likewise developed a " growing obsession to make his work count for something " (170). Thus, his willingness to lower his own standards " in order to make Dreiser's virtues stand out more boldly "

(170-71) resulted in his inability to explain Dreiser's strengths in totally convincing terms. Praising Dreiser for his consistency in empathizing with the victim, Matthiessen, in essence, became a victim to an unsympathetic society whose accusations regarding his homosexuality and communist sympathies brought him closer to Dreiser when he noted the novelist's chief goal was " to arouse compassion for anyone caught in the clutches of incomprehensible circusstances " (172). *Theodore Dreiser*, a critical biography, was left unfinished at the time of Matthiessen's death.

Gunn's book, though hardly unfinished, could have been more critical of its subject's achievements. Interesting and cogently expressed in offering masterful glimpses into the author's sympathies, life and work, *F. O. Matthiessen* is nonetheless essentially a summary of Matthiessen's literary, religious and egalitarian ideas. While at times probing, Gunn refuses to be more thorough in answering the obvious charges laid against Matthiessen's scholarship these past twenty years. This is not to take away from the fact that this book should be read by even the most general literary scholar; for it still enumerates in clear and forceful prose the significant ideas and theories of one of our most fascinating, complex and exceptional critics.

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Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures by John J. Richetti. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975. Pp. viii + 244. $21.00.

No matter from what perspective critics approach Daniel Defoe's novels, they are soon confronted with a basic contradiction, usually expressed as a confusion between secular and religious values. Traditionally, this problem has led to lengthy discussions of conscious or unconscious irony in Defoe's narratives or to a series of repeated efforts to advance the claims of one or the other of these two competing realms. In an earlier study, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson* (1969), John Richetti, instead of arguing for the pre-eminence of either secular or religious values in early eighteenth-century narratives, described this confrontation not in terms of an irreconcilable confusion, but rather as a meaningful and essential relationship. In Richetti's most recent study, *Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures*, the terms of the contradiction become those of the self and the other. Religious and secular values combine to become one side of a conflict with the demands of the autonomous self on the other.

Although Richetti treats each novel separately, he describes the relationship between self and other in three different but obviously related ways. Like a number of other critics now preoccupied with eighteenth-century conceptions of the self, Richetti has turned to Hume's version of personal identity as a way of defining the problem, although he does not address himself to the difficulty of applying Hume's categories to a writer whose novels appeared a generation earlier than *A Treatise of Human Nature*. *Defoe's Narratives* becomes, in part, a study of the paradoxical but reciprocal relationship between the perceiving self and the world perceived, between the self as " free and prior to experience "

and the self as "the mere result of experience." Richetti also locates in Defoe's novels a theory of the self in which an innate and essentially aggressive "will to power" is transformed into a morally acceptable "will to survive" in the face of extremely hostile environments (Crusoe's island, for example, or Moll Flanders' London). Thus, Richetti can describe the "characteristic pattern of Defoe's narratives" as one of "free action in the context of compelling circumstances." The third conception of the self that Richetti traces through the novels involves a dichotomy between desire and social mastery. In Defoe's fictional world, social mastery depends upon holding unqualified natural desires in check. Richetti argues, using the example of Roxana, that as soon as a character admits to natural affections and needs, he sacrifices some degree of social control over others.

My summary of Richetti's argument in *Defoe's Narratives* should make it clear that his critical procedures involve locating patterns of confrontation between paradoxical but competing forces and holding the inconsistencies in some kind of balance, instead of trying to explain away the contradictions by emphasizing either side of the confrontation. What becomes particularly interesting and perhaps problematic about Richetti's method is that he takes a Marxist approach to Defoe's contradictions—Marxist not so much in terms of an analysis of economic and historical forces at work in Defoe's world, though throughout the book there are passing references to the social and economic contradictions of a market society, as an attempt to deal with Defoe's numerous contradictions and inconsistencies by employing the techniques of dialectical analysis. Since dialectical analysis allows for a full and complicated response to the phenomenon of contradiction, this approach represents a significant contribution to Defoe criticism because it regards contradiction not as a problem to be resolved away but precisely as the starting point for further investigation.

Richetti's use of dialectical analysis does, to be sure, present problems. But before confronting them, I want to emphasize here the success with which he employs a prose style perfectly designed to reflect and analyze the contradictory yet reciprocal forces at work in Defoe's narratives. Richetti's own sentences are examples of concepts held in a dialectical relationship with one another, dialectical in the sense that an idea is developed and brought to completion by simultaneously seeing it in relation to its opposite. Not surprisingly, some of Richetti's best sentences pair off such oppositions as limitation and liberation, freedom and necessity, nature and society. It is by juxtapositions such as these that Richetti can demonstrate convincingly that that which "threatens" the self simultaneously "defines" it as well.

Dialectical analysis, then, is a method of relating and developing ideas which leads to conclusions of some subtlety and precision. But it can also encourage formulaic rigidity and a resulting lack of clarity. Take, for example, the following passage: "The new first term (self needing to move forward aggressively for survival) negates the negation of the second term (other, Moll's declining circumstances), and the conjunction produces a third term (self, now fully realized because balanced, moving forward while apparently still)." This quotation comes as a summary of an extended discussion of Moll Flanders' criminal career. Although we are invited here to engage in the familiar triadic movement of dialectical analysis, at the same time I wonder what clarity emerges from such a statement.

If Richetti's commitment to dialectical analysis betrays him on occasion into formulaic statements, another issue that we need to confront here is whether he explains his approach as a method of literary analysis as fully as he ought to. Although it becomes clear, as we read through *Defoe's Narratives*, what critical tradition Richetti is working in (Lukács, Lucien Goldman, René Girard), I wonder whether dialectical criticism has gained such wide-spread acceptance and understanding in this country that it can be presented without a rather comprehensive introduction. Only a few years ago Frederick Jameson could lament in *Marxism and Form* that unlike the intellectual milieu in Europe there was no true Marxist culture in America. In spite of the efforts of Jameson and a small group of like-minded critics, has the situation changed so very much? I am not denying the validity of Marxist or dialectical modes of criticism out of hand but rather suggesting that their methods and assumptions still need more explicit and self-conscious examination than they receive here.

In addition to raising general methodological questions, Richetti's specific application of dialectical analysis to Defoe's novels also presents problems. To some extent, his own critical methods with their carefully balanced attention to the competing forces of the self and the other underestimate the extent of Defoe's anti-social tendencies and overemphasize the importance of community in Defoe's narratives. For example, Richetti sees Captain Singleton's return to England as an acceptance of social restraint. It is true, of course, that the act itself of returning is some kind of admission of social realities. At the same time, the paroxysms of disguise that Singleton and his friend William engage in upon their return (revealing themselves to no one, not even to relatives, wearing the beards and clothes of Greek merchants, and never speaking English in public) hardly suggest much adjustment to English society. Richetti's dialectical method implies and requires such social accommodations, yet it fails to recognize fully the obsessive fears that Defoe's narrators display when confronted with the world. Dialectical analysis may be a comprehensive way of dealing with Defoe's inconsistencies. At the same time, I am not convinced that even dialectical analysis can solve the problem of the radical and finally irreducible contradictions of Defoe's narratives.

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Forms of the Modern Novella, by Mary Doyle Springer, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975. Pp. ix + 198. $12.00.

We can not imagine a science that lacks a common vocabulary of word and symbol: chemistry without the periodic table, or biology without taxonomy, is impossible. Unfortunately, the so-called "sciences of man," literary criticism among them, continue to remain hampered by inaccurate terminology and private languages. The Chicago school of neo-Aristotelian criticism has become one of the very small number of critical enterprises which, whatever its other merits, has already developed a common language and theory. This, in turn, has enabled its exponents to settle some issues at least provisionally, and to move on to others, especially in the theory of prose fictions.

It is particularly instructive to watch a criticism of genre developing within this system, exfoliating out of several seminal works of the last thirty years. To discuss Mary Doyle Springer's very helpful book is also, inevitably, to discuss the earlier essays and concepts whose contributions to her genre theory she summarizes in the book's first fifteen pages. It is a theory which can adapt a remark from one of Wimsatt's essays (hostile to the Chicago critics) to its own uses: "The goodness of a saw, its capacity to cut, is determined by the steel fashioned in a certain shape" (p. 11).[1] Prof. Springer reverses this order of precedence, seeing the envisioned "capacity to cut" as primary "function" or "purpose" (the two words are used interchangeably), and the shape as derivative. Not accidentally, this evokes Kenneth Burke's identification of form with "the functioning of a structure to achieve a certain purpose" (p. 11). The relevant forms or structures are not saws, of course, but literary works, and the relevant functions are the effects that the works are intended to have on an audience. Although she takes altogether too much for granted when she discusses these psychological effects, Prof. Springer never confuses the intentions of a work's designer with the intentionality that is inherent in and manifested by the designs of the novella's several forms.

Novellas, she insists, are not long short stories or short novels, though they are almost always between 15,000 to 50,000 words long. The genre is defined by its own "special powers [which] are not simply a matter of degree" (p. 5). Nor is the genre definable by the historical circumstances of its origins in the pages of nineteenth-century magazines, whose policy it was to set limits to length. Instead, it is the *relation* of length to function that becomes central to the definition of genre which is presented here. There exist "a series of formal functions which can best be achieved at that length, functions which cause authors intuitively or consciously to choose that length" (p. 9). What Prof. Springer is claiming for this particular genre is, as Claudio Guillén has shown in a formidable essay, characteristic of all genres. To read his "On the Uses of Literary Genre'[2] alongside the book under review is to be convinced that the model of a genre exists not as a prescription but as a potential, an *invitation* for a dynamic coupling of certain forms, themes and modes in order to achieve a chosen rhetorical purpose. Most of this book is an inspired catalogue of the several forms subsumed within the genre of the novella, and an examination of their probable psychological effects on the reader.

The modes which help to differentiate the various forms of the novella-genre are, as Prof. Springer acknowledges, borrowed from Sheldon Sacks's *Fiction and the Shape of Belief*. Assuming that all fiction involves characters in some action/conflict, she distinguishes three strains: the Action uses "unstable relations between characters that are tightly plotted in order to be resolved into either [sic] a tragic, comic or serious effect," while the Apologue "makes use of characters and what happens to them to maximize the truth of a statement"

[1] William K. Wimsatt, "The Chicago Critics," *The Verbal Icon*, ([Lexington]: The University Press of Kentucky, 1954), p. 62. Springer errs in assuming the remark is originally Wimsatt's; he is quoting a third party.

[2] Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 107-134.

(p. 10). Lastly, the Satire is often more loosely episodic than the others, but since it has "the purpose of ridiculing objects in the world outside the story" (p. 10), it too maintains a coherence of vision. Rather half-heartedly, Prof. Springer also adopts Sacks's claim that since these modes are "principles of wholeness" in the Aristotlean tradition, they must remain mutually exclusive. This commitment to theoretical purity creates most of the book's problems, and a similar commitment—often confused with consistency—is responsible for the failure of Chicago criticism whenever it has to deal with mixed genres, such as encyclopedic narrative. David Richter's useful recent book (which is related to this one, and advertised on its back cover) sputters in frustration when confronted with Pynchon's *V.* because he, like Prof. Springer, prefers a powerful but inevitably limited critical orthodoxy.

The first and most important of the six forms of the novella-genre is called, confusingly enough, the "apologue," after the mode which produces it when coupled with the length and devices of the novella. More than a dozen examples of the form are mentioned, and four are discussed at some length. Based on this sample, Prof. Springer prepares "a compendium of the signals" which can serve to identify the apologue-novella; this occupies fourteen pages (pp. 39-53) and represents a checklist which is both very helpful and slightly ridiculous. When she lists the first of nine such signals, labeled "distance from protagonist's character," and discusses the five variations or devices which come under it, an orgy of categorization seems under way; yet the author clearly shows that each of these signals is derived from a large sample of novellas to whose length the device mentioned is particularly suited. For example, the distance maintained between us and the protagonist by a device such as killing him off when the story opens (*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*) would seem intolerable in a novel-length fiction. Here, it serves to focus our attention on the apologue's statement.

Since it is impossible to summarize or criticize all the details of Prof. Springer's discussion of the apologue-novella, it is worth looking at her extended analysis of one of the chosen representatives of this form, D. H. Lawrence's *The Woman Who Rode Away*. She shows how the end of the plot's events is fore-ordained, how early in the story the unnamed protagonist accepts the inevitability of her own death so that, as with *Ivan Ilyich*, only the most naive reader can read on anticipating a reprieve, and focusing on plot. Other elements of the fiction, such as diction and the emphasis on ritual, all serve to obtain the reader's assent ("whether he personally likes the statement or not"—p. 27) to the author's claims about the nameless woman, namely, that "she must die, and we must feel the fearfulness of it, not for the sake of tragic fulfillment, but for the sake of the message: that female restlessness must be overwhelmed (must "die") by that shaft of sunlight which is the phallic principle, a profoundly different matter, it is made clear, from mechanistic male domination" (p. 26).

I cannot help doubting the possibility of always separating "message" from "character", let alone of maintaining the hierarchy which is claimed as necessary for the form. To take as example a novella mentioned by Prof. Springer, Melville's *Benito Cereno*, I do not think that its message, the color-blindered vision characteristic of a whole culture, can be separated from the consciousness of the character Delano, who does not merely symbolize that

paradoxical and blind vision, but is its only full embodiment for us in the fiction.

Yet Prof. Springer's "compendium of the signals of the apologue" is so thorough that even as one disagrees with one signal, one is forced to admit that the cluster of signals can function much like a diagnostic manual's checklist of symptoms; not all of the items mentioned will appear in any one case, but enough will do so to enable us to identify the genre and perhaps the form. Of course, the importance of such identification is not merely that it satisfies the more compulsively orderly critics among us, but that it can purify our critical language while shaping our expectations, and therefore our response and judgement. In view of this, it is a pity that Prof. Springer does not expand her cryptic remarks on two famous short stories, Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," both of which she identifies as apologue-novellas *manqués*, which fail because the authors "did not sustain and enlarge their statements at an appropriate length" (p. 52).

The second form Prof. Springer establishes is rather awkwardly called "the apologue that teaches by example." This is defined by its "ability to focus clearly on what happened to a single central character and still cause its statement to dominate the fiction" (p. 56). The example-novella seems to me to be a more narrowly focused variant of the apologue-novella, and I cannot help feeling that the two distinctions Prof. Springer emphasizes are not enough to justify the creation of this second category. These distinctions are, first, that the focus on a central character is nearly exclusive and designed to encourage us "to apprehend him as a representative of an exampled way of life" (p. 56), and second, that the universality of the character's condition is heavily stressed. Both Crane's *Maggie* and Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* are examined, and Prof. Springer makes her best case for this separate form with the stress she puts on Ivan, not as a character, but as an exemplary "prisoner in this kind of place" (pp. 65-6), which is to say, not just in the prison-camp but the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it seems very difficult to separate our responses to the general statement from the one concrete reality which we know, the character of Ivan. Furthermore, when we compare this novella with Lawrence's, we see that though the *place* in which the woman who rode away is ritually killed by the Indians is exotic, the message derived from it *is* intended to be universal, and aims at the life of western men and women as Lawrence saw it, "an exampled way of life," in Prof. Springer's terms. The differences in generality in the two novellas are at best matters of degree, not of kind.

The satire-novella, the third of six generic forms, results from a combination of the third of Sacks's modes with the novella's length and devices; in that sense, its structure parallels that of the apologue-novella. Prof. Springer defines it "as the kind of whole where the parts cohere in humorous ridicule of objects in the real world that depart from a good that is clearly suggested within the work itself" (p. 99). For "objects," we would do better to read people and attitudes. At any rate, Prof. Springer claims that this form is particularly successful because the length-limitation of the novella forces the satirist to choose his targets and episodes carefully, as satirists who have had the scope of larger and looser forms—Swift is mentioned—did not always do.

The final three forms established by Prof. Springer lack the sharp definition of the first and third. They include the novella as "degenerative tragedy" (e. g. Kafka's *Metamorphosis*), the novella with a "serious plot of character revelation" (e. g. *The Turn of The Screw*) and the novella with the "serious plot of learning or failed learning" (e. g. Joyce's *The Dead* (!) and James's *The Aspern Papers*). The separate discussions of the examples of each form are enlightening, but incapable of justifying the author's enthusiasm for the proliferation of subclasses. This last third of the book especially, and indeed the book as a whole, would have been much better had Prof. Springer been consistent in examining the *functions* possible within a genre instead of the categories. Faced with a similar but tougher predicament, Roman Jakobson realized that an enormous number of categories would be needed to make a classification that could encompass all linguistic utterances, and so he chose to outline instead a scheme of all the possible functions of language; he was satisfied with just six. In any statement, such as "Hello, how are you? ", one function—here, the phatic—would be *foregrounded*, while the others might be absent, or be present and suppressed in various degrees, thus making any number of combinations or categories possible. Prof. Springer uses an idea very close to foregrounding when she discusses the relative importance given to character and action in the apologue-novella, but at no point does she give precedence to the concepts of function and foregrounding over that of "form". Her book is very useful because it is a pioneer and scrupulous study of a neglected genre and of the ways in which one might approach a definition of its forms. Its mistakes are made in a style so clear and in the course of an argument so lucid that they, too, stimulate and teach.

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Occasional Form. Henry Fielding and the Chains of Circumstance, by J. Paul Hunter. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975. Pp. xiv + 263. $12.00.

The broad theme of this book is that Fielding's writings reflect the uncertainties of a changing world rather than any unshakeable confidence in older, "Augustan" stabilities. It goes further in this view than previous critics, both in arguing that these uncertainties are evident well before the time of *Amelia*, and in seeing them as pervasive rather than merely occasional or local in much of the earlier work. *Tom Jones*, about which Mr. Hunter writes very well, is seen as the "epic" of this "modern consciousness", and some readers may feel that Mr. Hunter has too loose a conception of what he wants "epic" or "modern" to mean. He worries at the "epic" with a not wholly adequate sense of what its associations with the "heroic" would mean to an age which still had an active familiarity with older heroic poems, and superimposes on this some undefined "epic" quality applicable to later sensibilities for whom the "heroic" was not in any sense an important preoccupation.

With "' modernity" too there are difficulties. Mr. Hunter's sense of the individual complexity of Fielding's works is rich, precise and enlightening, but his sense of how periods can be defined or described is something unduly simple or rigid. Fielding's age is too bluntly described as "marking the shift from medieval to modern in England," and he speaks crudely of writers being "pro-" or "anti-Augustan" in a way which almost implies that "Augustanism" was a matter of conscious and as it were party-political allegiance.

The book deals with all the major narrative works except *Jonathan Wild* (an odd omission in view of Mr. Hunter's special interests, unsatisfactorily explained on p. 235 n. 1), with *Shamela*, and with a selection of plays. Mr. Hunter is at his best on *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones* and *Amelia*, but the early chapters are full of good insights and useful information. There is a most interesting account of the *Tragedy of Tragedies*, and of the figures which lie behind that play's allusive universe: Shakespeare (a particularly good discussion of the jokes of allusion and of pointedly omitted allusion to Shakespeare is given at pp. 24-32); Dryden; Scriblerus, Swift and Pope. A chapter on "Fielding's Reflexive Plays" from *The Author's Farce* to the *Rehearsal*-plays of 1736-7 comes to the conclusion (shared by most students of the subject) that these plays are an example of a peculiar manner which was to reach full success only in the novels. A slightly laboured discussion of *Shamela* argues that Fielding's "emphasis fell heavily upon the absurdity of the enemy, more heavily than upon alternative values, but he was on his way to the method of *Joseph Andrews*, which offered positive, fully articulated values in a no-less-funny book." The chapter opens up to *Joseph Andrews* with a deft summary on pp. 92-3 of the many things in *Shamela* which prefigure the bigger book.

In Chapter 5, with *Joseph Andrews*, the book comes into its own. As if to herald the fact, the chapter opens with a new directness and confidence in Mr. Hunter's own writing. Good insights show how Fielding manipulates and betrays the reader's expectations, notably on the question of Joseph's chastity. The sustaining of that chastity has an element of surprise, because the mock-Richardsonian context would lead us to expect his "fall" rather than his "folly". Mr. Hunter brings out the special nuances of Joseph's comicality, and their relation to Fielding's serious attitude to chastity, with both subtlety and good sense. Joseph's transition from comic absurdity to the status of "a mature, sensible hero" is finely observed, and Mr. Hunter writes better than any other critic known to me on Fielding's comic emphasis on Joseph's sexual appeal in childhood, and the witty suggestions of his precociously Priapic though unutilised virility. He has new things to say about Fielding's choice of the Biblical names of Joseph and Abraham, and refers us to Thomas Morgan's *The Moral Philosopher* (1737-40) and the controversy which it aroused, in order to bring out contemporary notions about the two Biblical personages and their prominence in contemporary consciousness. Unlike some critics, Mr. Hunter does not over-interpret or oversimplify the importance of the Biblical or theological background, and understands that Fielding is not "writing a theological treatise": the religious overtones help to define "reader expectation" rather than to supply the novel with a bogus thematic armature.

The whole method of this book at its best is to resist turning particulars into themes. The insistence throughout is on the play of circumstance, the whiff

of the particular detail. A remarkably successful discussion of Thwackum and Square in *Tom Jones* argues against the common view of these characters as "created representatives of concepts." To those of us who might feel tempted to refer to the many proclaimed preferences for "generality" in literature by writers of the time, including Fielding himself, Mr. Hunter refreshingly replies that "the mid-eighteenth century (conditioned by lampoons, *chroniques scandaleuses*, and the standard devices of journalism) fostered a tendency to read everything in terms of personal attack and local application." This counter-truth is worth asserting. And Mr. Hunter writes with fresh detail of the various possible real-life models for Thwackum and Square in a way which enables him to show that these characters would have seemed to contemporary readers not "gross and absurd caricatures," but "highly believable." Throughout the book, we are made to feel the press of contemporary incidents, publications, preoccupations, as competing with traditional forms and echoes in a tense and creative vitality: "eighteenth-century works have a special dependence upon contexts beyond the biographical; their burden is the burden of the present."

Mr. Hunter often plays down the importance of patterns of symmetry and order in Fielding. On a few occasions, he shows an (in my opinion) unnecessary loss of nerve in making obeisances to critics who take a different view. But most of the time he maintains his ground with both firmness and subtlety, showing again and again how in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* Fielding's favourite ideals are under pressure from brute fact; how "The world of time has intruded upon timeless visions, demonstrating that perfection exists no longer and that anxiety for it can deceive and corrupt"; and how "writers continued to operate from retreating premises long after communal agreement ceased—and without full consciousness either that the premises had to be defended or that, in equally many cases, the premises had become merely verbal formulas holding a place for newer premises not yet articulated."

Mr. Hunter goes on to argue that such stresses show themselves not only in *Amelia*, where they are on the whole well-recognised, but in earlier work, and that the ending of *Tom Jones* especially shows a weariness and rigidity that look forward to the final novel. His closing comment on *Tom Jones* is that its "radical symmetry...at once asserts the absolute order and calls all into doubt."

A final chapter, previously published in a different form, deals with *Amelia*. It is a most distinguished discussion, acute, sensitive and rich in detailed observation. It has become well-known in its earlier form, and does not need extensive comment here, except to say that it is valuable not only for what it says about *Amelia* but also for the light it throws on the earlier work. Then, in a fascinating brief comparison between Fielding and Richardson as writers who, for all their mutual antagonism and their differences of character and style, had to respond to a similar cultural situation at the same moment in time, Mr. Hunter says of the final novels of each:

> After two novels of heroines Richardson tries, not very successfully, to draw a hero, just as Fielding had gone from two heroes to a failed heroine. That England's two best writers at mid-century both failed in their last and least characteristic novels is a kind of joke on the century's search for direction and for self.

Among other and more incidental excellences of this book, there is a particularly enlightening account of the travel-metaphor in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, of the nature of travel-symbolism ("Unlike the grand hotel in old films or the rooming house in high school plays, journey is not only a convenience but a repository of a whole series of traditional meanings"), of recent changes in travel-literature towards the prosaic and the trade-minded, and of differences between those eighteenth-century novels which involve travel and those which are set in one place. Again and again there are sharp insights and thought-provoking or witty formulations: on Fielding's treatment of his readers (pp. 7-8); on the reason why "so many eighteenth-century men wrote competent dull verse" (p. 18: "The culprit is not Reason or Rules or the "rigidity" of the couplet, but a notion of self-discovery that seeks in the past cultural affinities at personal, spiritual expense"); on Cibber, who "was . . . not only humorous and comical but also ultimately as silly and trivial as he liked to pretend" (p. 89); on Hervey, who "bore the seal of the Walpole government long before he administered it" (p. 91); and many others.

Against these, one may set some infelicities of expression, sometimes merely inelegant or inappropriate, sometimes confusing and perhaps confused: "One common complaint against enthusiasts was that emotionality dilated beyond their stated intentions" (p. 84); "Traditional kinds tend either toward imitation or evitation" (p. 86, and "evitation," "evitational" *passim*); Joseph's "inability to cope makes him susceptible to the physical punishment usually absorbed by schmucks and fools" (p. 108); "'democratizers' like Richardson" (p. 138); "stunning judgmental thrust" (p. 185).

A few other cavils. I think Mr. Hunter draws undue inferences from the verbal difference between Milton's need to "justify" God's ways and Pope's desire to "vindicate" them (p. 187); it would have been nice to see Christopher Hibbert's attractively illustrated book on *The Grand Tour* mentioned among the "more recent discussions" (p. 241 n. 2); and there are a good few misprints. But this is a rich, intelligent and rewarding volume, and students of Fielding are greatly in Mr. Hunter's debt, though I daresay some may be too hidebound or too churlish to admit it.

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