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Book Reviews

A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky, and Conrad by Bernard J. Paris. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1974. Pp. xii + 304. \$10.95.

This book, as the ample title suggests, is far more ambitious and larger in scope than Professor Paris' previous work, *Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values* (Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 1965). The earlier concentration on a single novelist has given way to a consideration of four additional "realists" (George Eliot is still represented with a chapter on *The Mill on the Floss*). And the Comtean typology of the "famous Law of the Three Stages of human development" so rigorously applied in the earlier book is now replaced by a new trinitarian taxonomy: Karen Horney's division of the neurotic personality into compliant, aggressive, and detached types. And yet, as even this description of differences cannot conceal, there is a strong kinship between the two books.

This kinship is, of course, genetic. When Paris protests in the opening pages of his new book that "if we come to novels expecting moral wisdom and coherent teleological structures we are usually going to be disappointed," (p. 9) I could not help but remember (by merely converting his universal "we" into an authorial "I") that *Experiments in Life* was founded on precisely such expectations and that after the book's completion Paris became disenchanted, as he explained elsewhere, on finding that George Eliot's fiction was not one uniform and stable vessel for her moral wisdom and Positivist beliefs. *A Psychological Approach to Fiction*, one discovers at the outset, was born as the result of a similar disappointment. Expecting to find a "unifying structural principle" at work in that most equivocal of novels, *Vanity Fair*, Paris was sadly led to conclude that Thackeray's novel was "inwardly inconsistent" because bereft of a "teleological structure" that would make the narrator's shifting values and the novel's "various motifs . . . intelligible." (pp. x, 72) Any other critic arriving at this disconcerting insight might have been tempted to take desperate measures, either by angrily banishing *Vanity Fair* from his personal Great Tradition or else by sophistically arguing that the very lack of "teleology" constitutes in that novel, as in Byron's *Don Juan*, a structural principle. Such tactics ("aggressive" and "compliant," incidentally, according to Horney's division) Paris eschews. His is a more arduous route: "As I struggled to understand the novel, I suddenly remembered Karen Horney's statement that inconsistency is as sure a sign of neurotic conflict as a rise in temperature is of bodily disorder. A fresh reading both of Horney and of the novel bore out my hypothesis that the inconsistencies of *Vanity Fair* make sense when they are seen as manifestations of a neurotic psyche, the structure of which includes and is, indeed, made up of conflicting attitudes and impulses." (p. x)

In its seeming redundancy, the preceding quotation has the disadvantage of

making Paris' enterprise seem far more limiting and self-evident than it actually is. Artistic inconsistency, it would seem, ceases to be an irritant the moment we remember that inconsistency is a neurotic hall-mark. Why? There are other difficulties. If we believe, with Freud, that all artists are neurotics and, with Anna Freud and Erikson, that the richness of their creations stems from their defensive capabilities in handling "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (to quote Keats, rather than Anna Freud or Erikson), then surely all literature, and not only pesky *Vanity Fair*, is made up of structures that incorporate, in varying degrees, "conflicting attitudes and impulses." These difficulties, however, do not necessarily in themselves detract from Paris' undertaking. As we shall see, he is actually uninterested in either the writer's or the reader-critic's involvement in the mastery of neurotic conflict; moreover, when he applies Maslow's notion of "self-actualization" or Horneyan typology to the novels under scrutiny, the results—though, to my mind, unnecessarily static—prove to be richer than the statement quoted in the previous paragraph would indicate.

Nonetheless, the statement helps to underscore the essential similarity of the impulses that underlie Paris' two books. Although *A Psychological Approach to Fiction* is ultimately more rewarding than *Experiments in Life*, both works are shaped by the same assumptions. In both, extra-literary nomenclatures are invoked to make recalcitrant fictions more consistent; in both, consistency, rather than a hobgoblin, is a prime *desideratum*; in both, the fiction that matters is "realistic" fiction because it presumably contains faithful representations of experience, "experiments in life." These are rather Johnsonian standards of judgment (one thinks of Dr. Johnson's own disturbed reactions to inconsistencies in *Hamlet* or *Lear*) and, as with Johnson, they are anchored in a deeply moralistic outlook. Just as Paris was initially attracted to George Eliot because she was able to resist pessimism and to uphold moral values in a godless world, so is he now attracted to the writings of the psychologist who has most consistently denounced Freud for side-stepping questions of right and wrong and for developing libido theories that "leave little room for a positive attitude toward change" (*Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis* [Norton Library: New York, 1966], p. 187). Paris welcomes the so-called Third Force psychology of Maslow and Horney because, unlike Freudianism and behaviorism, this psychology contends—as Spencer, Lewes, and George Eliot were made to contend in Paris' previous book—that humans possess an "evolutionary constructive" force which urges them to realize their inner potentialities. In *A Psychological Approach to Fiction*, the psychologists, rather than the novelists, are the sole purveyors of value and "health." The "conclusions" of *Vanity Fair*, we are told, "have wide applicability, but they by no means do justice to the potentialities of the human species." (p. 128) Even George Eliot has become a fallen idol: "If, as Maslow claims, we make continual discoveries of the good by observing the lives of healthy people, then fiction that was written from a healthy perspective or that depicted healthy characters could, indeed, fulfill the objectives that George Eliot defined for her own novels. George Eliot, however, for all her genius as an artist, did not possess the qualifications necessary for conducting such experiments in life." (p. 188)

Taken by itself, Paris rather sadly concludes, fiction can seldom provide "the

communication of healthy norms and a balanced view of life" that he so obviously prizes; for such "illumination," he tells us, "I am inclined to go to psychologists like Horney and Maslow, who are likely to know more about what is healthy and what is sick than do literary artists." (p. 130) And yet he regards fiction and psychology as mutually illuminating: taken together, they give us "a far more complete possession of experience than either can give by itself." (p. 27) Although many a student of literature might greet this assertion with skepticism, I am perfectly willing to believe—in theory—in the fruitfulness of such a wedding. Nor have I any qualms when, in his book's last paragraph, Paris reasserts his profound belief in the system that gives him such satisfaction: "In Third Force psychology we have a major contribution to human understanding." (p. 290) Perhaps. But does this book's practical application of Maslow and Horney really enrich the five novels under analysis? Is Paris' examination of Dobbin, Amelia, Maggie Tulliver, and Conrad's Marlow as case studies in compliance and self-effacement—"I hope that they have emerged from my analysis as as highly individualized human beings, with different histories, problems, inner lives, and human qualities" (p. 285)—a profitable undertaking? Or does this disengagement of vivid, "real" human beings from each fiction destroy the "organic" and "mimetic" qualities he professes to find in his chosen novels?

Despite his thorough grounding in theory of fiction and Third Force psychology, there is something curiously archaic in Paris' proceeding. Highly aware of the difficulties faced by psychoanalytic critics such as Norman Holland and Frederick Crews, he prefers to avoid, rather than meet or try to resolve, similar problems. Psychoanalytic criticism has found it unusually difficult to deal with the simultaneous interaction of what Holland calls the "three possible minds"—the mind of the author, the mind of the character, and the mind of the reader. In his just published *Out of My System*, Crews, the most judicious of the psychoanalytic critics, despairs of the possibility of fully recreating the authorial psyche shaping a given work; Holland, for his part, has asserted that a work of literature can become meaningful only if we apply psychology to "our own real and lively reactions" rather than to characters in the work or to the mind of the author. Paris is conscious of this dilemma. Yet instead of devising a method, with the aid of Maslow and Horney, that will permit him to discuss the interaction and interpenetration of the "three minds," he simply dismisses two: like Holland, he refuses to think of the "author as a historical person" (p. 13); unlike Holland and like Crews, he is unwilling to examine his own affective responses, possibly because to do so would, for him, be tantamount to a participation in "unhealthy" and hence undesirable, neurotic responses. All that is left, then, are the internal "minds" within each novel: the minds of the central characters and the mind of that "fictional persona" or "dramatized conscience" which he, following Wayne Booth, calls "the implied author."

Paris thus acknowledges the dilemma recognized by Crews and Holland by circumventing it. "Thackeray" is merely the Showman of *Vanity Fair*; the novel's orchestration of effects is less significant than its faithful representation or copy (Paris would do well, by the way, to reread Coleridge's shrewd, anti-Johnsonian distinction between "copy" and mimesis; he consistently confuses the two) of neurotic personality disorders or neurotic relationships. Novelists, for Paris, intuitively depict what the analyst can diagnose and cure. Fiction thus

becomes curiously static; it freezes neurotic trends that can become reconstituted only in living minds under psychiatric care. *Vanity Fair* can become reduced to a chart depicting Aggressive-Compliant and Aggressive-Aggressive Character Relationships; and Thackeray (the author, apparently, and not the implied author) can even be accorded some "admiration" for his "presentation of characters and relationships." (p. 92) At times, though very seldom, Paris relaxes his ground-rules and permits the intrusion of some "reader response": "For the reader the showdown scenes [Dobbin-Cuff, Amelia-Becky, Rawdon-Lord Steyne] are intensely exciting; he has so long felt anger and frustration on behalf of the compliant protagonist that he experiences a delightful release of tension and enjoys the aggressive behavior without guilt or reservation." (p. 95) It is no coincidence that on such occasions the reader of Paris' book should likewise experience a delightful release of tension; for only then does Paris seem to acknowledge what his methodology wants to stifle, namely, that our interaction with conflicts that may be destructive in real life can be intensely pleasurable, even cathartic, when re-enacted in the safety of a fictive world.

In a concluding chapter entitled "Powers and Limitations of the Approach," Paris defends against the charge of reductiveness. It is not the limitations of this study, however, that are troublesome, for despite its rubricizing and self-imposed restrictions, it achieves what it sets out to do. What is disturbing is the author's insufficient realization of "powers" that could have been tapped had Horney and Maslow been more imaginatively enlisted. The defensive and compensatory strategies that Horney examines can be applied to more than isolated characters: the phenomenon of "externalization," to take but one example, is crucial to all those fictions which use environment and external event to characterize internal psychic disorders. Even historical fiction—the removal of conflict to the era of Waterloo or the Reform Bill—involves a deliberate act of deflection. Paris never grapples with the relations among the five novels he discusses individually. Is it significant or not that all of them should have appeared in the nineteenth century? Horney insists again and again that certain civilizations and cultural epochs are more prone to anxiety and conflict than others. Yet Paris provides no common denominator for his five novels; nor does he ever give an example of the anti-type of the novel which, unlike his five, "is organically unified" and relies on an "implied author" who is "a deeply integrated and coherent human being." (p. 14) Perhaps he is thinking of *Henry Esmond* which, he later avers, he considers superior to *Vanity Fair* because, like *Notes from Underground*, it relies on first-person narration and hence eliminates the nagging "disparity between representation and interpretation." (p. 131) It is no coincidence that Paris' chapter on "The Withdrawn Man: *Notes from Underground*" should be the most satisfying in the book, for here the concentration on a single psyche is fully warranted and involves no real mutilation of other aspects. If, in their avoidance of theme, symbol, setting, imagery, genre, some of the other chapters seem unduly truncated, they should nonetheless be carefully read. For despite the dissatisfactions I have voiced, *A Psychological Approach to Fiction* is by no means a negligible book.

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New Directions in Literary History edited by Ralph Cohen. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. Pp. viii + 263. \$10.00.

This collection of thirteen essays (unfortunately without an index) from the journal *New Literary History* may be presumed a hard-cover appeal to the general scholarly reader who is interested, in Ralph Cohen's words of the Introduction, in the "theoretical basis for practical inquiries" into matters of (as the title indicates) new directions in literary history. The first two essays, by Hans Robert Jauss and Robert Weimann, offer perspectives on large programs within certain ideologies of West and East European academic circles, and I should like to consider them in detail later. The other essays are more focused. D. W. Robertson Jr. offers "Some Observations on Method in Literary Studies," makes a survey of various methodologies, and concludes with suggestions about change in literary study in terms of interdisciplinary work with emphases on social institutions. Alastair Fowler's "The Life and Death of Literary Forms" does not deal so much with the biological metaphor as with reader reaction ("Pro-nounce a genre dead if works related to it directly are no longer widely read"); he finds a three-part development to such forms: birth, epigone, and transformation. Geoffrey H. Hartman in "History-Writing as Answerable Style" continues to develop the essay into an art form of its own; in this one, he argues that we may spoil a work by packing too many meanings into it through a kind of obsession with historical interpretation (his "Toward Literary History" in *Daedalus*, 99 [1970] may be consulted as a proposal in terms of "the artist's struggle with his vocation").

Louis Mink in "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension" discusses three ways of ordering knowledge, the theoretical, categorical, and configurational (the latter is story). Wolfgang Iser treats "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" as "the process of anticipation and retrospection," the "unfolding of the text as a living event." Michael Riffaterre understands "The Stylistic Approach of Literary History" to result in "a history of words" only indirectly related to social history; he discusses literary influences, the relation of texts to trends and genres, successive meaning of a text, and the text's original significance. Barbara Herrnstein Smith's essay "Poetry as Fiction" (which could have used compression) rests on distinguishing poetry as imaginative writing that is historically indeterminate; she wants the stress placed on linguistic structure but urges a historical perspective as well. Henryk Markiewicz investigates "The Limits of Literature" and, after a survey, concludes with a definition in terms of some linguistic functions: fiction, redundancy, figurativeness. The final group offers some unusual perspectives. Svetlana and Paul Alpers in "*Ut Pictura Noesis?* Criticism in Literary Studies and Art History" observe parallels and differences, noting particularly the art historian's general disinterest in biographical and social information. A survey and analysis of the poetics of a literary form not often worked with is offered by Francis R. Hart in "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography." George Garrett, author of the novel about Walter Raleigh, *Death of the Fox*, deals with the empathic recovery of the past through "the larger imagination, the possibility of imagining lives and spirits of other human beings, living or dead, without assaulting their essential and, anyway, ineffable mystery."

Among these wide-ranging essays Cohen identifies a central concern with literary history as a "history of the relations of readers to works" with a desideratum of "historical explanations for their [the relations] genesis and revision." This is to be seen as a synthesis between the way of the positivist, who would treat the literary work as an object essentially determined by its social or biographical genesis, and the ways of the formalist, who would find in it an essentially verbal, ahistorical significance. Neither extreme is much admired today, of course, and the question becomes, rather, where to put the stress along such a spectrum. Jauss's work, as a member of the *Poetik und Hermeneutik* group at the University of Konstanz in West Germany, is based on the methodology of "reception aesthetics" and his essay "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory" is an extended and cogent description of the approach. Weiman is at the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR in East Berlin, and his complex Marxism is basically at odds with Jauss's work, in spite of large areas of agreement. Weimann's essay in the collection, "Past Significance and Present Meaning in Literary History," only adumbrates his objections and I should like to refer below to his specific reply to Jauss, "'Reception Aesthetics' and the Crisis in Literary History," which appears in English in the Fall number of *CLIO* (1975). A comparison of the thought of the two men reveals the deeper issues in literary history today.

Jauss would have literary history written in terms of the work's "reception and impact" upon "reader, listener and spectator" (and critic and historian) from "generation to generation." As the work effects changes in the "horizon of experience" historical significance "will be determined and its aesthetic value revealed," with canons established by the "ever necessary retelling of literary history." Jauss nails seven theses to the door. The first has it that the critic can only "justify his own evaluation in light of his present position in the historical progression of readers" (it is, perhaps, not oversimplifying to think of this as taking former criticism into account). The work is not "an object which stands by itself" nor a "fact" like the Third Crusade (one may wonder whether historians would agree that an event of this magnitude, requiring explanation, is a "fact"). The second thesis asserts that literature occurs within "conventions of genre, style, or form," with the work either evoking expectations in order to frustrate them and so advance the "horizon" or else, because of either literary or social familiarity, "objectifying the expectations." In the third thesis, Jauss reinforces the premium on a kind of innovation by saying that the work's value emerges as it "negates familiar experience or articulates an experience for the first time." Works that effect no horizon change are "culinary" or light reading. After successive readings, classics or masterpieces come dangerously close to this realm, so that "special effort is needed to read them 'against the grain' of accustomed experience so that their artistic nature becomes evident again." The fourth thesis has the "reconstruction of the horizon of expectations" built on "the questions to which the text originally answered." In this way, literary judgment is not based on either the past or the present, but lies in the "successive development of the potential meaning which is present in a work and which is gradually realized in its historical reception by knowledgeable criticism." Jauss is firm in rejecting two things: the classical as the "prototype

of all historical contact between past and present," and mimesis as a "metaphysics of substance."

In the fifth thesis, Jauss deals with the diachronic implications of his proposal. Because old and new values are in "mutual mediation," the aesthetics of reception causes the interpreter to "call upon his own experiences." The new, however, "is not only an aesthetic category" because of the necessity "to face the questions of which historical forces really make the literary work new." The sixth thesis questions the understanding of homogeneous, synchronic structures in an age, and points out that "things which occur at the same time are not really simultaneous." Art, law, economics, politics may all be occurring within their own histories. It follows that the literature of a time may not be a homogeneous order at all but a "morphological fiction" that can only be unified through the perceptions of the "readers who perceive them as works of *their* present." In the superimposition of such synchronic sections "works which articulate the process character of 'literary evolution' in its history-making moments and epochal caesuras" are revealed. The seventh and final thesis is that literature has a "society-forming function" in that it "not only preserves real experiences but also anticipates unrealized possibilities." The reader is stimulated to new aesthetic and moral perceptions, for the work can "confront him with a question which cannot be answered by religiously or publicly sanctioned morals." In this way, literature helps "in the emancipation of man from his natural, religious, and social ties" (a desirable state of being for Jauss). The literary work can also—as in the case of modern literature—"reverse the relationship of question and answer and in an artistic medium confront the reader with a new 'opaque' reality which can no longer be understood from the previous horizon of expectations." Thus literature's achievement is seen when its function "is not understood as one of imitation."

The points of contention between Jauss and Weimann are in regard to the importance of genesis and mimesis and, in the larger frame, of the meaningfulness of history. The Weimann essay in this collection urges that literary history must merge two approaches: the work as a "product of its time, a mirror of its age, a historical reflection of the society to which both the author and original audience belonged," and the work as "not merely a product, but a 'producer' of its age; not merely a mirror of the past, but a lamp to the future." Thus the "mimetic" (the historical) and the 'moral' (the ever present) functions interact." "History can be studied as meaning: the structure of the work of art is potentially inherent in its genesis, but in society it becomes functional only through its effect in terms of a human and social experience." Structure, then, is neither entirely "its genesis or its affective relations" but a fusion of both.

In Weimann's *CLIO* essay, he applauds Jauss's stressing the importance of literary impact and effect and his desire to lay such responses within the social nexus, but feels that, in reception aesthetics, "by generalizing, indeed making absolute, the sphere of literary 'consumption,' little more than lip service is left for the history of literary production." Jauss's reference to the need of "establishing *post festum* the coherence of literary fact" brings a needless and "false alternative between reception aesthetics and the positivist study of sources and influences," so that the attack on the positivist method and the literary work as "object" risks assaulting a straw man. Weimann realizes that Jauss does not

mean to cut away the literary work from history, but fears that his "horizon of expectations" is "deduced from purely literary criteria: namely, from norms, conventions, and associations with literature itself." The fundamental problem is that Jauss's "reader" is an abstraction, says Weimann, and the objectification of this horizon "is not the full context of the reader's experience or the actual world of history which serve as the basis here, but rather *the reflex from subjective expectations* and previously observed aesthetic understandings which is fed back into the literary work." Weimann acknowledges that in his seventh thesis Jauss tries to orient the now plainly entitled "literary experience" within "the context of the experience of daily life," but all such desires come down to little more than "the quality of verbal gesture."

Weimann laments Jauss's disparagement of the mimetic function of literature, although he knows Jauss would subsume it within reception aesthetics. To Jauss's comments on how the "new artistic techniques" of *Madame Bovary* broke through the horizon of expectation and brought about "the greatest imaginable social effectuality," Weimann reacts by granting the great effectuality of the impersonal narrator but asks if the novel's impact could not have come about "perhaps primarily by means of the mimetic exploration and the representational disclosure of a new world of society?" Jauss's reluctance to investigate literary genesis and the mimetic function, says Weimann, obviously derives "from the literature of modernism. Its *avante-garde* self-understanding is from the outset opposed to the very society it might have given expression to." Jauss's program is a "presentation of the conflict between art and society" and the "horizon of expectation is thus drawn from the negativity of its conception into a value-setting criterion." Weimann regrets Jauss's description of classical masterpieces coming close to being "culinary art": "an historical dialectic of past significance and present meaning is displaced by an interpretation which 'goes against the grain'!" Weimann willingly grants that Jauss goes beyond the ahistorical view of the formalists but "what this view fails to overcome is the modernistic principle of innovation without perspective." The result is a "relativism which affects all values and value judgments in literary history" and "fails to provide an answer to what is perhaps the most pressing problem of literary historiography: how can the literary historian historicize the norms of the pre-history of his own standards without hopelessly relativizing the modes and objects of his present judgments?"

If, as Cohen says, most of the essays in the collection are concerned with some aspect of literary history in terms of the relations of reading to works, Weimann's objections to the aesthetics of reception are reminders to those that are struggling with methodologies stressing the social origins of literature that they may not yet be lost in a hopeless cause. It is well to be reminded that the critic-historian must understand the work in its full development among successive readers in order to experience that expansion and integration of understanding that comes with truly apprehending the reasons why others thought about the work as they did, but it is equally true that this must somehow be fused with an understanding of why the author wrote what and as he did and what in his social perceptions caused him to do so. As to intentionalism, it is surely no less difficult to understand the sensibilities of the readers than to understand the author's. The real problem, as Weimann says, is how both these types of

understandings are to be integrated without critical agnosticism. Perhaps there is something in the development of structuralism—an idea that works, author, society, critics, and the historian all engage some kind of “structure” (perhaps conceptual, not necessarily linguistic)—which will point to even newer directions in literary history.

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Charles Dickens' Sketches by Boz: End in the Beginning by Virgil Grillo.

Boulder: The Colorado Associated University Press, 1974. Pp. xiii + 240.

\$11.00.

Dickensians are remarkably patient. This study of *Sketches by Boz* is the first book-length examination of the work that made Dickens inimitable 138 years ago. But it makes one feel that for once Dickensians have not waited long enough. Grillo's introductory “Over-View” overstates the case. To find “virtually all of the elements of Dickens' mature work . . . present in the *Sketches*,” a critic must turn up more windfalls than Micawber could. There are three major theses: an analysis of *Sketches* in relation to comparable literature of the times demonstrates Dickens' superiority; the sketches provide a record of Dickens' developing artistry; and they are the original embodiment of problems that plague the later fiction. The first thesis is argued interestingly but unfairly, and the next two are mishandled disastrously.

In chapter 4, which might well have come first, Grillo prefers Dickens to Egan, Hook, and Hood by comparing passages from each writer's sketch of Greenwich Fair. Premised on the untenable assumption that these passages represent each writer at the top of his form, the experiment is rigged from the start. Moreover, Grillo ignores Addison, Steele, and especially Goldsmith, all of whom may have influenced Dickens as much as his contemporaries did. Excellent charts in chapter 5 show the original order of publication for the sketches and the subsequent rearrangements they underwent. Since several of Grillo's theories stem from the way Dickens gathered and reorganized his work for the various editions, this chapter also ought to come earlier.

Needless complexity results from Grillo's insistence in chapter 2 that Dickens “published short stories for almost a year before he began publishing sketches.” The difference in genre is not made clear, and the distinction does not seem to have occurred to Dickens. Grillo oversimplifies when he derives a “formula” for the stories: a character's idiosyncrasy is aggravated or frustrated by events, or else the uncommon aspects of something common are entertainingly revealed. While the classifications are not inaccurate, they seem narrow, reductive, and incomplete. In “The Boarding House,” where the formula supposedly has an apotheosis, Grillo finds that Dickens dramatized the disjunctive idiosyncracies of nine different characters in less than 1,000 words. Peacock, whom Grillo never mentions, might have admired the condensation, but would surely have recognized the technique.

Grillo's chapters do not follow one another logically. In chapter 3 he switches to an entirely new approach by applying Ernst Cassirer's *Mythical Thought to Sketches*, which is like selecting a hammer to open a can of sardines. This fashionable attempt to examine Dickens by using the concepts of a Continental philosopher ignores the drawback that much of Cassirer's theory about primitivism and the mythopoeic mind was based on the findings of late nineteenth-century anthropologists, whose ideas have since been seriously challenged. "Mythical consciousness" and Dickens' presentation of reality in "The Misplaced Attachment" have little in common. The world of *Sketches* is seldom a simple, transparent world. Grillo contends that it is, and that Dickens' narrator, a sardonic, cocksure wise-guy, creates a self-defeating "schism" between the mythically simple, comprehensible story world and the narrator's ironic descriptions of it. The only schism is in Grillo's imagination. The narrator's ability to adopt a superior stance and uncover the world's peculiar complexity is both process and theme in *Sketches* and throughout much of *Bleak House* for that matter; it is not the unresolvable dualism of transparent world and cynical observer that Grillo manufactures.

The imaginary generic tension between the short-story writer and the writer of sketches is a split that Grillo soon magnifies into a serious division in Dickens between his negative capability (the compassionate response) and his satire (the discrimination of appearance and pretense from reality). Though he tries to be magnanimous, Grillo blames Dickens for being ambivalent, which for Grillo is cowardly. Dickens should be sympathizer or satirizer, not both. Grillo invents what one must call "the two Bozes." The so-called short stories show Dickens as a sardonic narrator whose vision of life is negative. His condescending, supercilious tone undermines Dickens' alleged contention that the world is really simple and straightforward. The other side of Dickens supposedly surfaces as the benign, genial narrator of the actual sketches who takes a more positive view of life and is frequently the apologist for a complex world. To the extent that Dickens in any extended work is always and everywhere both, that is, positive and negative, compassionate and hostile, Grillo's unintentional parody of "Dickens: The Two Scrooges" points up some weaknesses in Edmund Wilson himself. A stark dualism, a strongly divided Dickens, is, after all, clearer and easier to define than a constant, contrapuntal mixture of attitudes and moods where the proportion of positive and negative ingredients continually fluctuates.

"The Old Bailey," which Grillo mistakenly uses to exhibit Dickens at his worst or most divided, really proves that a complex response is not a hopelessly divided one. To be attracted, repulsed, intrigued and outraged by both the smart-aleck defendant, a young boy who prefigures the Artful Dodger, and the judicial system that justly imprisons but cannot crush or even understand him is neither hypocritical nor schizophrenic. Dickens is not split but endlessly, richly, subdivided. He can take the boy's view and the court's. The contrapuntalist must function this way if he is to bring out the multiplicity or variety of life, including the limitations of any single attitude or response. Dickens the indefatigable impersonator and Dickens the judicious observer are not warring elements in a divided personality. They are just two of the complementary, ever-present facets in a many-sided one. To demote a contrapuntalist to a dualist is unfairly reductive: it makes a man of a thousand voices, attitudes, and faces into Jekyll and Hyde.

According to Grillo Dickens' "conflicting attitudes toward the world," mar the later fiction as well. The "mythic apologist" for Victorian society and the "sardonic promulgator of an absurdist view," he argues, jostle each other competing for the reader's ear, as if they were the only two alternatives and the choice between them clear. But surely both the cynical third-person narrator in *Bleak House* and Esther, the untiring goody-goody, are truthful and necessary. So are the satiric presentation of a selfish, atomistic society and the gradual unfolding, satirically, optimistically, comically, and ironically, of an underlying interconnectedness. Grillo's is a strange plea for the abandonment of multiplicity in favor of simplicity and single-mindedness. Outgrowing his early Manicheanism, Dickens rapidly developed a Shakespearian awareness of life's richness and complexity. The darkness of the later novels, the fuller picture of the world's evils in all their interlocking subtlety, is offset by a stronger sense of life's fundamental diversity and the distinctly humane possibilities that constitute a large part of it. This is not the way Grillo wishes Dickens had gone. He should have become either Swift or Macaulay, a disgruntled misanthropist or a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

Only the first 120 of 218 pages actually concentrate on *Sketches*, and this half is the inferior portion of Grillo's book. The final four chapters, 6 through 9, emphasize the early novels and then survey the later ones. Grillo's reading of *Nicholas Nickleby*, the longest and best section in the book, does justice to a badly neglected novel, while the account of Dickens' obsession with *natural* and *unnatural* as words and concepts in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is often first-rate. As chapter 6 indicates, however, Grillo continues to convert Dickens' assests into liabilities. He accuses Dickens of "Saying it Both Ways," of being unable to "take a single and sustained attitude" for or against a given issue. For Grillo, *Pickwick Papers* is flawed by the initial presence of two narrative intelligences, satiric versus sympathetic; the departure of the sardonic one, not the arrival of Sam Weller, saves Mr. Pickwick for the immortals. This would mean that the scenes in the Fleet were not done by Dickens the satirist. One side of Dickens constructs ideal worlds for his better characters, Grillo argues, while another scrupulously presents a mean, greedy world that undermines one's confidence in idyllic retreats. Here Grillo misunderstands Dickens' borrowings from the utopian convention. Utopia, after all, means "nowhere."

Dislike for a contrapuntalist Dickens reaches absurd proportions when it forces Grillo to argue that *Bleak House*, more so than *Nickleby*, is marred by its profusion of tones. Such a profusion, however, is another means whereby art imitates life's constant contrasts not only of event but also of manner and mode. A novel, says Grillo, should be for or against reform, and not see this issue from a variety of viewpoints in a diversity of moods. Specifically, Dickens ought not to have included tragedy and comedy, Tom-All-Along's and the Jellybys, in the same novel. Grillo would have more of a point if life did not give evidence of both, juxtapositioning was not a form of revelation, laughter not as valid as tears, the Jellybys not an important variation on the social failings that produce slums, and the exposure of such hidden connections, apparent dissimilars that are really similar, not one of the contrapuntalist's major delights.

How then can *Sketches* best be treated? The present century has always regarded them as the poor relative in the Dickens canon. Dickens' first phase,

Stephen Marcus pontificates, runs from *Pickwick* to *Dombey*. Hillis Miller, whom Grillo borrows from but never properly quotes, uses *Sketches* to provide a crux for his investigation of "the fiction of realism." Grillo's byword is that "even great writers must practice." Hopefully, this reasonable assumption will not deter future critics from confronting *Sketches* per se, without viewing them primarily as a long-lost clue to the later Dickens or the occasion for illustrating a literary theory. Even when practicing, Dickens was pretty good. If he must view *Sketches* only as anticipation and prelude, Grillo ought to produce more substantial evidence. Designating a "red-headed and red-whiskered Jew. calling through the trap" in "Private Theatres" as "the Fagin prototype" impresses no one. Because Grillo is weakest on the question of Dickens' developing artistry, he obscures the tremendous development involved in the progression from short scenes, brief character studies, and quick satires on specific abuses to the complex, multi-plot novel, in which all of these ingredients and many more had to be organized into monthly parts that could later be read as an integrated whole.

Viewed properly, *Sketches* shows Dickens learning the novelist's art a step at a time, from scenes and character sketches to short tales that include both and incorporate more plot. Boz himself seems to have recognized the evolution. The order he adopted for the one-volume edition of 1839, an arrangement most subsequent printings preserve, divides *Sketches* into three groups: "Scenes," "Characters," and "Tales." Dickens' early strengths as a novelist run the same way: a genius for character creation and brilliant scenes but, at least in the first few novels, a very loose or else rather mechanical sense of plot, this being the one facet of the art of the novel he had little chance to practice prior to 1837 on anything but the smallest scale.

Dickens chose to commence the 1839 edition with "Seven Sketches from Our Parish." They form the first instance I can find of a Dickens world, a reasonable facsimile for the imminent Victorian one, yet recognizably Dickens' own. The progression from character sketches of the parish beadle, the curate and others to a group portrait of four sisters, an account of an election, and a description of several ladies' societies is remotely similar to the opening chapters in any novel by the maturer Dickens. *Bleak House*, for example, introduces some of the same subject matter. In both places Dickens presents an initial multiformity which soon proves to be united by a common denominator, be it the follies and foibles of our parish or the concealments, snares, and irresponsibility of our Chancery. Dickens' subsequent mastery of the installment method and his talent for design, namely the achievement of unity and panorama more through contrast, comparison, and variation than plot, are latent in "Our Parish." Although these sketches can best be read separately, they have a cumulative effect like that of installments. A sizeable gap separates the diagnosis of the condition of England in *Bleak House* from the playful analysis of "Our Parish" in *Sketches*, but Dickens' narrative and structural techniques were formed on connective short pieces like these and schooled further on installments. His pervasive tone, a constant mixture of irony and empathy, seems to have been there in its mature form almost from the start.

When Grillo quotes my essay on *Nickleby*, one wishes that here and elsewhere he would use correct footnote form so others could locate his sources. Even the bibliography shows signs of carelessness: it transplants James Kinkaid's essay

on *The Old Curiosity Shop* from *Dickens the Craftsman* to *Dickens Studies Annual*, Volume One. Grillo's style, redundant and jargon-clogged, constantly works against him. Finally, his subtitle quotes a twentieth-century poet when Wordsworth would be more apt. Dickens did not discover his origins and allegiances late in life the way Eliot did. Instead, he evolved from his beginnings, making the child, a precocious, deprived and ambitious child, the father of the man. Dickens' ending was not really in his beginning in Eliot's sense of the phrase. The distance from the blacking warehouse to Gad's Hill is infinitely greater than that between St. Louis and the philosophy of *The Four Quartets*. For Dickens, though rich and famous, there was never a sense of homecoming, no glimpsed still-point, just constant flurry.

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The Readable People of George Meredith by Judith Wilt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975. Pp. x + 253. \$12.50.

After a half-century of neglect and dispraise the novels of George Meredith are coming to be more highly valued. V. S. Pritchett's book in 1969, Gillian Beer's in 1970, and a collection of essays edited by Ian Fletcher in 1971 have played an important part in the revival of interest in Meredith's fiction. Each of them points out Meredith's genius but also frankly admits his defects as a novelist. As Virginia Woolf said in her essay on Meredith, when speaking of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, if his novels hold together it is certainly not by the depths and originality of his character drawing. And as E. M. Forster stated in *Aspects of the Novel*, whatever makes his fiction interesting, it is certainly not his ability to construct plots, Meredith being one of the great "contrivers." And as practically everyone who has commented on Meredith's novels has maintained, his style is inconsistent, frequently cute or cloying, ranging from epigrams to extravagant poetic imagery. With his inability to create believable, sympathetic characters, to construct a plot, and to write in an accessible, attractive style Meredith was, so his critics have said, a flawed genius.

Judith Wilt attempts to show that some of these flaws may indeed be virtues, or at least characteristics which put him "in the same column of narrative history as today's Barth, Borges, and Nabokov." She is concerned to examine the manic view with which the writing persona of most of Meredith's novels regards his story, his readers, and himself. The title of her book may perhaps be misleading. *The Readable People of George Meredith* sounds like the title of an old-fashioned, appreciative essay. Miss Wilt's book, on the contrary, is highly sophisticated, "readable" in her title meaning not "interesting" or "enjoyable" or something like that, but "problematic" or "to be read." Because her use of the epithet "readable" is complex, it is difficult to summarize what she attempts in her study. In brief, however, she argues that what is required for a proper appreciation of Meredith's fiction is a special kind of identification—a contract, so to speak—between the reader and the writer of the novel to the extent that the reader is, in her words, "shaped, animated, 'ensouled' by the

novel." In other words, the reader is requested to join in the making of the meaning of the work: an able reader will be read-able.

According to Miss Wilt, the able reader of a Meredith novel is changed, apparently in a unique way, by his experience of the novel shared with the novelist. On the level of story or plot Meredith's protagonists are depicted as tempted or overcome by sentimentalism and egoism. In the subplot, which frequently is concerned with a (or the) novelist writing a (or the) novel, the author plays with the temptations that the characters feel in the plot so that the reader is made to feel these temptations too. In the end there emerges a transformed reader and novelist who become a Civilized Reader. Yet even this final entity, if I understand Miss Wilt correctly, may not be the desired or perfect end, because in being "civilized" the reader-writer may be suppressing too much a part of himself which is romantic or "natural." In the last analysis, to try to gain a root conception of character—to fix a person so that he is perceived from only one stance or angle of vision—is to falsify character, both the real and the fictional one, the healthy person being he who is held in dynamic tension between various opposing thrusts of personality and of reality itself.

The argument is carried on mainly in terms of the rhetoric of fiction—manner of narration, plot, subplot, authorial commentary and distancing. Miss Wilt focuses particularly on five novels—*The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *Sandra Belloni*, *The Egoist*, *One of Our Conquerors*, *The Amazing Marriage*—and attempts to show Meredith's own growth towards creation of the true Modern Novelist and thus of a Civilized Reader by considering primarily the narrative strategy of these novels. In these books, she says, there are two voices—one the truly philosophical, the other its flaw or vice—which struggle for control of the narrative and thus of the reader's allegiance. In *Feverel* they are the unnamed narrator and Adrian Harley; in *Belloni* the Novelist and the Philosopher; in *The Egoist* the narrator and the Comic Spirit; in *Conquerors* the voices of satire (especially as embodied in Colney Durance) and comedy (represented at the last by the novelist himself); in *Amazing Marriage* by Dame Gossip and the Modern Novelist.

The analysis of each of these novels is both interesting and persuasive. The introductory chapters, which make up roughly a third of the book, are also of interest in their consideration of, *inter alia*, Cervantes, Fielding, Sartre and McLuhan. Some readers may not feel, however, that the introductory essays provide the necessary groundwork for the study. It is understandable that Miss Wilt should wish to avoid a lengthy discussion of Meredith's philosophy—the subject so dear to the Meredithians of the 1890's and early 1900's. Yet her estimate of what Meredith was trying to do in fiction might more readily convince a sceptical reader if she had demonstrated in greater detail the relationship between Meredith's thought and the effects for which he aimed (according to her) in fiction. When Miss Wilt says in her last chapter that for Meredith "reality is a mystery, partly known and partly not, and increasing one's knowledge of it is a matter of maintaining contact with all the mysterious impulses, the romantic impulses, that penetrate man's nature, while at the same time trying to penetrate those impulses with the tools of consciousness," some readers perhaps would like to have further support for such a statement about Meredith's ontology. It is always a little disconcerting to have an author's philosophy extrapolated from

his novels, and it is an especially suspect procedure with a writer like Meredith, who works so largely in the ironic mode.

There are few footnotes and no bibliography. The references are not always easy to follow. For example, the quotation from Lionel Stevenson on page 218 is given, in the text, as "p. 332." The work to which this page number refers was previously cited in a note on page 55. There being no bibliography and a very poor index (to which I shall further allude presently), the reader must consequently go thumbing through the text to find what is being quoted. (Incidentally, the page number cited is incorrect: it should be 322, not 332.) The full bibliographical information for Gillian Beer's *Meredith: A Change of Masks* is, on the other hand, given twice, less than twenty pages apart—on pages 102 and 121. Among other inconsistencies of styling is the citation of the "Essay on Comedy," printed in italics on pages 179 and 195 and within quotation marks on pages 28, 173, and 209. The index is woefully inadequate. It does not include the names of a number of persons mentioned in the text; does not give all titles cited in the book—the "Essay on Comedy," for example; and does not fully list page numbers of personal names and titles. The quotations from Meredith are frequently inaccurate, the errors lying mainly in omission of marks of punctuation and in notation of paragraphs. In general Miss Wilt writes well, though one could wish that she had avoided jargon like "Meredith's value world" (p. 63) and illogicalities like "centers around" (pp. 152, 214). These are, however, fairly minor complaints.

The Readable People of George Meredith is a welcome contribution to Meredith studies. One hopes that it will encourage other evaluations of Meredith's technique. One hopes, in fact, that it will hasten the day when someone undertakes a full-length study of all Meredith's novels along similar lines.

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Romantic Landscape Vision: Constable and Wordsworth by Karl Kroeber.

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975. Pp. xi + 139. \$10.00.

This slender book declares two aims, one excessively large, the other modest. The large aim is to offer a fresh understanding of Romanticism, a term which Professor Kroeber rather darkly suggests may denote not an "abstract pattern," but "an order dialectically constituted, combining symmetries and dissymmetries among disparately autonomous elements." This great aim is to be reached through achievement of the smaller aim, which is simply to work out meaningful analogies and differences between the art of Wordsworth and the art of Constable: four poems by Wordsworth are paired with four paintings by Constable—the "spots of time" passage from *The Prelude* with *The Haywain*, *Tintern Abbey* with *The Cornfield*, the stanzas known as *Peele Castle* with *Hadleigh Castle*, and *Home at Grasmere* with *The Leaping Horse*.

Not even the most sympathetic reader will find it easy to grant that either

aim is achieved. The book does offer a number of fresh and interesting observations. It may, perhaps, as Kroeber modestly hopes, "help to open new avenues" for comparing sister arts. But serious difficulties are built into its design. When a painting is compared with a poem, when whatever is said has to apply to both, criticism is almost inevitably reduced to commonplaces, on the one hand, or to strained, imprecise analogies on the other. Both the "spots of time" and *The Haywain*, we are, for example, informed, are portrayals of "moods" that are unportrayable: "what is not visible is as much at the heart of Constable's picture as at the heart of Wordsworth's poetry." (This seems true enough for Wordsworth, a little surprising for Constable.) The parallel, having been laid down, must be maintained. If, in Wordsworth, "the visual is transformed into the visionary," we must know that "*The Haywain's* simplicity, too, conceals richness." Moreover, both poem and picture are rich not only in "textures" but in "contrasts"—"most obvious is that between movement and quiescence." That is, "picture and poem are alike and different because Wordsworth reveals the fixedness that exists within life's movement, and Constable reveals the movement that exists with[in?] life's fixedness." These pat, tidy observations lead to the unsurprising discovery that "Wordsworth and Constable are alike in straining, however unobtrusively, the limitations imposed by their respective media."

These examples, all drawn from the "spots of time" / *Haywain* chapter, may suggest the book's limitations. Jean Hagstrum's fine, cautionary introduction to *The Sister Arts*, published nearly twenty years ago, seems not to have been much heeded (Hagstrum shows up in Kroeber's full and helpful annotations, but not in his index because the notes are not indexed). What we miss is the central, vital elements of Wordsworth's "spots of time" and the rich complexity of his views of nature, none of which can be found in Constable. The anxious tension that grips the watching boy, the sense of solitude in desolation, the awful power of the wind, the water, and the elements, are all itemized but disappointingly reduced by using them to point up superficial parallels with Constable's strategies and tactics. Nothing is made of the "ministry of fear" that helped to shape the growing Wordsworth (nature is never fearsome or monitory for Constable), nothing of the ambivalence toward nature which recent critics of Wordsworth have made so much of (Constable never had to resolve the conflict between mystical and sacramental ways of celebrating a landscape).

We could go on through other chapters and come away with the same disappointments. At one extreme of simplicity are some remarks on *Tintern Abbey* and *The Cornfield*: "the primary relation dramatized in each work is that of man to nature," and the poem and the painting are alike in that their subject is somehow "compositionally textured" so that it is hard to tell what each is really about. At the other extreme are some strange notions in the *Home at Grasmere* / *Leaping Horse* chapter regarding the way a poetic landscape is feminized by "the liquidity of the sounds," and the bizarre image of Wordsworth as a wolf, in his relationship to nature.

But the book does have virtues, and it would be misleading to pass them over. Kroeber probably comes closest to achieving his aims in the chapter which deals with *Peele Castle* and *Hadleigh Castle*. Here, and especially in the chapter's

closing pages, a conventional topic, the interaction between nature and the mind, is explored with admirable subtlety. The exploration widens out to comprehend Romantic art in general, and the book's brief conclusion, three chapters later, draws together some of the elements of this discussion: Romantic psychology, Romantic sensibility are "alien" to us; "the nature in and the nature of Romantic art is obsolete"; Constable and Wordsworth are "linked by a common remoteness." If not especially novel, this conclusion may be taken as a thoughtful counter to easy assertions of continuity between the Romantic and the modern tempers.

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Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading by Avrom Fleishman. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975. Pp. xiii + 227. \$10.00.

Avrom Fleishman's newest book opens with the assurance that this is not to be simply another "'source study' or intellectual biography;" this is to be "a reading of Woolf's nine major fictional works." There is, however, a measure of uneasiness in such a guaranty. The trip through the images and symbols of Virginia Woolf is neither a mean nor an infrequently attempted passage. When the expedition is led by one whose guidance is openly "eclectic" rather than "systematic," we have reason for concern. One more reading of *To the Lighthouse*, one more reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, one more reading of each of the nine: just one more we do not need. What we do need is a clearly formulated approach to the work of Woolf that does not stop and start again with every title. We need a discussion of the major fiction that allows us to see the whole of what this remarkable woman produced, not merely the genius of her individual productions.

Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading does not provide a complete discussion of this essential issue, but, perhaps more importantly, it begins the discussion at last. Though his argument is occasionally crippled by the brilliance of his insight into particular aspects of a single novel, Fleishman's is a clear and integrated reading. His contribution is all the more welcome since we are spared the vague speculation and *bon mots* that have so often characterized Woolf scholarship.

Fleishman's book is a fine one not because it is a revelation, but because it is a guide. It begins with the early novels in an effort to establish a thematic and structural basis for the novels to follow. This in itself is not particularly unique. What is unusual, however, is the great care with which Fleishman establishes the statement and individual character of these relatively neglected novels. For him *The Voyage Out* represents "a turn in the tradition of the English *Bildungsroman*—one of the major strains in the novel's tradition—toward the tracing of a metaphysical education." *Night and Day*, often benignly dismissed as merely a conventional love story, is just as firmly embedded in the greater traditions of English fiction. Fleishman examines it "as a systematic attempt to rework comic conventions when dealing with the generic themes

of illusion and reality, the compact of lunatic, lover, and poet, and the miraculous transforming power of love." This "comic" celebration of love is seen to be Shakespearian, not merely because of the "winey spirit that pervades its lovers' illusions and transformations," but through Shakespeare's actual "presence in the text—by direct reference, thematic derivation, and parodic echo. . . ."

Thus *Night and Day* and *The Voyage Out* are not cited merely to establish in miniature the themes that dominate the more famous novels. Both are allowed a real and substantial presence of their own; both are convincingly presented as major innovations well within the history of the English novel. What is more, by relying entirely upon textual evidence, Fleishman is able to document a kind of developmental reading that is far from ordinary. Biographical predicaments and textual possibilities, often an integral part of Woolf criticism, are ignored. Fleishman remains completely within the text and explicates both symbol and image with a rigid attention to detail. While extremely careful of the integrity of each novel, therefore, he is able to build by accumulation a strong case for the conscious, systematic development of Woolf's vision and to document well the growth of her unique power of expression. He is also able through the use of this technique to broach much larger issues as well: the function of Shakespeare in the development of Woolf's vision of mankind, the thematic affinity between Woolf and Conrad in their views of the social world, and the extent to which Woolf partakes of the syncretic modernism of Joyce and Mann.

It is, perhaps, this rigor that most accounts for the book's major flaw. For an "eclectic" Fleishman is amazingly systematic. His penchant for order is clear from the very beginning: he has a "schematic form" for *Night and Day*, including a documentation of the communion of Ralph and Katherine (a through d) and a description of the novel's concluding paragraph (a through j). The same is true for *Jacob's Room* (a through e, then a through i, and a through e). *Mrs. Dalloway* is divided into twenty-one sections, *Orlando* into six, *The Waves* into nine, and *The Years* into eleven. Such an orderly process is normally not offensive at all; in fact, quite often it is extremely helpful.

However, Fleishman occasionally catches himself on his own hook. This is notably the case with his discussion of *The Years*. He insists that, with one exception, all of the eleven sections of the novel "are constructed with an epiphany as end-in-view, although some have more than one such moment." Each section, he maintains, ends with an epiphany and begins with a visit. The task of making the novel fit this critical design, however, is not always easy. Fleishman finds it necessary to make a number of strange distinctions between different types of epiphanies. At one point a "feeling" at the end of one section becomes "what might be called a proleptic epiphany, significant not immediately but potentially." At another point the epiphany is "a moment of questioning rather than of revelation." The very fact that there is a "sense of heightened consciousness throughout" is cited as sufficient proof that an epiphany has occurred. Such a strong desire to make the novel consistent with a critical apparatus is unnecessary to the argument and serves only to cast some doubt on the very position it seeks to advance.

Ultimately these points of overzealousness, if we may call them that, are not serious. Fleishman carries his point in spite of them. *The Years* really is a good example of the use of the epiphany. It is not invariably so, but that does not

deflect the argument or detract from the novel. Fleishman is a good and reliable guide. He merely pursues his quarry for a time after it is caught. And even if such extravagancies were multiplied far beyond their number, this would still be a book of singular learning and rare insight. We have here not merely a reading of several novels, but, through the novels, a reading of the art of Virginia Woolf. It is for this that criticism is attempted: the illumination of the work of an artist. Fine instances of this kind of criticism are scarce indeed. It is good to have another.

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Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England by Emory Elliott. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975. Pp. xi-240. \$10.00.

In 1684, Samuel Willard published a series of twenty-eight sermons on the parable of the prodigal son. His choice of subject and the intensity of his examination provide striking evidence of qualities which Emory Elliott finds characteristic of Willard's ministerial generation: emphasis on New Testament themes, an affirmative tone, application of doctrine to the troubled members of the congregation rather than to the "visible saints," and a deep concern with conflict between the generations. *Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England* examines the relationship between the first and second New England generations and the language by which the ministers interpreted, ordered, and helped to form the understanding of new-world experiences. Agreeing with those who hold "that it is through language that we define and understand our existence and that those who shape the language are truly unacknowledged legislators of the world," Elliott argues persuasively that the seventeenth-century Puritan ministers gradually provided the myths and metaphors by which their congregations could move from a sense of personal spiritual defeat to one of collective strength.

As befits a study of language, *Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England* is solidly grounded in Puritan writing. Elliott claims to have read everything published in America before 1700, and his work shows a wide-ranging and deeply perceptive knowledge of New England sermons, diaries, and other writings of that century. His thesis is shaped as well by the scholarship of earlier generations of colonialists and powerfully influenced by recent social histories of early New England, by demographic studies of particular Massachusetts towns, by structuralism, and by psychohistory.

Elliott stresses the conflict between the first-generation Puritan patriarchs and their second and third-generation offspring, and his principal concern is with the problem faced by the younger generations in accepting themselves and finding their role—emancipating themselves somehow from an older generation which held the lands, limited access to the churches, and developed a mythology of its own special errand into the wilderness while relegating its sons to economic dependency, spiritual inadequacy, and historical decline.

The ministers, he argues, guided the resolution of this conflict in various ways: by articulating the original mythology of errand and quest, by objectifying the conflict in the complementary myth of decline, and eventually by providing a revitalized language by which the younger generations could see themselves as continuers of the errand, refurbishers of the candlesticks, and new guardians of the wall. In surveying this development, he emphasizes the transitional role of Increase Mather, the revolutionary positions of the Third Church ministers—Thatcher and Willard, and the climactic role of Cotton Mather while offering insight into the achievements of Eleazar Mather and Edward Taylor. All, he shows, struggled to find language which would heal the intense psychological wounds of their second-generation auditors and free the repressed strengths of the new Puritan community.

Although he builds a central thesis of generational conflict, Elliott recognizes other factors such as the Indian wars, charter controversy, and European philosophical shifts which also contributed to the changed society of late seventeenth-century Massachusetts, and he acknowledges that the ministers were responding to currents of sentimentalism and perhaps even Arminianism in their evolving rhetorical emphasis. Yet his thesis remains persuasive, especially as he demonstrates so forcefully that the Puritans themselves understood this complex transition as a struggle of fathers against sons. The conflict of generations provided material for decades of sermons, to the point that one sympathizes strongly with the decent folk of the second generation who suffered through Increase Mather's jeremiads in their youth only to be abused in their old age by Cotton's fulminations against their insensitivity to their own sons.

Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England is a stimulating and solid book, of particular value to students of colonial literature but useful also to anyone concerned with American intellectual and social history. There are only a few problems, chiefly focused on the title, which suggests a broader sweep of inquiry than Elliott provides as his work is limited almost exclusively to seventeenth-century Massachusetts and makes no real effort to deal with all of Puritan New England nor with all kinds of power. When he does venture into the eighteenth century, in fact, he falls into simplistic generalizations about Jonathan Edwards. Nonetheless, Elliott has provided significant insights in this tightly-packed study, and his work leads outward to other scholarship. The bibliography and footnotes, in particular, offer superb guides to colonial scholarship from the nineteenth century to the unpublished dissertations of the seventies. This is a fine book—challenging and refreshing; it leaves one with a clearer understanding of second and third-generation Puritans and with a heightened respect for their literature.

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