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Book Reviews

James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne and Their Contemporaries by Jonathan Goldberg. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983. Pp. xvii + 292. \$25.00

Renaissance literary criticism is moving into an exciting phase. Like most significant developments in criticism this one aims to produce not just new readings of texts but new knowledge about them. Its starting point is simply put by Jonathan Goldberg in the Preface to *James I and the Politics of Literature*: "to discover more adequate ways of articulating the relationship between society and literature" (xiv).

In the USA one significant branch of the work committed to this discovery, and from which Goldberg's book grows, has come to be called the new historicism; it draws on anthropology, psychoanalysis and European "theory"—Geertz and Foucault being prominent influences. Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* was a pioneering and still the most outstanding example of it. The present book acknowledges a generous debt to Greenblatt.

Similar developments are underway in Britain, and they might be called, for convenience rather than by consensus, cultural materialist; the term is borrowed from its recent use by Raymond Williams, while its practice grows from an eclectic body of work in the post-war period. It includes, of course, the considerable output of Williams himself, the convergence of history, sociology, and English in cultural studies, and feminism, as well as Marxist, structuralist and post-structuralist theory, especially that of Althusser, Macherey, Gramsci and Foucault.

There are differences, certainly, between these two movements on different sides of the Atlantic, but it's their similarities I'd like to indicate here by way of indicating a context for considering Goldberg's book.

To begin with, both refuse to privilege literature in the way that criticism has done hitherto; as Raymond Williams argued in an important essay: "we cannot separate literature and art from other kinds of social practice, in such a way as to make them subject to quite special and distinct laws" (*Problems in Materialism and Culture*, London, 1980, p. 44). Put another way, this actually involves a radical contextualizing of literature which eliminates the old divisions between it and its "background": the arts "may have quite specific features as practices, but they cannot be separated from the general social process" (Williams, p. 44). One consequence of such an approach is that it leads us beyond or away from the literary criticism preoccupied with supposedly universal truths which find their counterpart in "man's" essential nature—the criticism in which history, if considered at all, is seen as inessential or a constraint transcended in the affirmation of a transhistorical human condition.

Further, it leads to a refusal of what Stephen Greenblatt has called "the monological approach of past historical scholarship," one "concerned with discovering a single political vision, usually identical to that said to be held by the entire literate class or indeed the entire population" (*Forms of Power in the English Renaissance*, Norman, 1982, p. 5). An instance would be E.M.W.

Tillyard's influential *The Elizabethan World Picture*, in which he expounded an idea of cosmic order "so taken for granted, so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages." The new historicism and cultural materialism would see this didactic stress on order not as the occasional articulation of the collective mind but as (in part) an anxious reaction to social change—an ideological legitimation of the existing order rendered the more necessary by its apparent instability, actual and imagined. We might recall here Francis Bacon's letter to some judges in 1617: "There will be a perpetual defection, except you keep men in by preaching, as well as law doth by punishing." Such preaching was not the occasion for the collective mind to celebrate its most cherished beliefs, but an attempt to tell the populace what to think "in order" to keep it in its place.

Both the new historicism and cultural materialism are concerned then to disclose historical process and in particular strategies of power and authority. They explore the complexity of those strategies and, in the case of the new historicism, focus on what they share with literature generally and drama specifically: representation. Thus Goldberg: "Monarchs and dramatists speak the same language, pursue the same concerns: the nature of conscience, the relation between inner states and external ones, private lives and public persons, absolutist identity and recreative role playing. The staging of power and the powers of the stage are central themes in this investigation" [chapter 4]. Also: "political reality, ordinary events, and staged ones are all matters of representation" (pp. 166, 177).

This is the real strength of Goldberg's book: he brings a deconstructive analysis to bear on powerful representations. Its scope is both wide and fascinating, addressing texts by Spenser, Shakespeare, Chapman, Jonson and Donne as well as circling back often to James's *Basilikon Doron*. Nor does it only address texts: one of the most interesting chapters explores the ideological function of the Renaissance family, in particular its reproduction of patriarchal society; Goldberg achieves this through an arresting analysis of family portraiture (there are 30 illustrations).

What Goldberg returns to, repeatedly, are the contradictions at the heart of the process whereby power legitimates itself. And he produces a complexity of analysis which corresponds to the complexity of the process itself—complex not least because of "the paradoxical form of power," its essential and strategic ambiguity, and because "'The real is as imagined as the imaginary,' and the actuality of politics requires the fiction of poets . . . politics and discourse are inseparably bound, knotted in contradictions" (186, 12, 55). Goldberg takes pleasure in loosening the knots sufficiently for us to see their intricacy and there is indeed a pleasure to be had in sharing that kind of knowledge. To ask of him that he fully untie those knots would perhaps be to ask for a kind of history that Foucault among others has taught us not to expect. But we might respectfully press for a deeper understanding of their significance. Goldberg writes: "There can be no such thing as an unambiguous expression of power, for it is precisely in ambiguity that power resides, making it as capable of direct as of indirect action." "Inherent contradictions," he adds, "sustain authority" (12). Certainly, but contradictions within the dominant order are also the points at which it falters and may be con-

tested; are also the points at which we may identify the process of change; can glimpse, and in part recover, the subordinate and marginalized knowledges which the ideological representation of power typically—and in its own terms, necessarily—represses.

What this raises, of course, is one of the most interesting current concerns of this kind of criticism, namely the question of whether social practices which appear to be subversive are indeed so; or are only apparently so, either being contained by that which they seek to subvert or even actually produced by it. The question is at once conceptual and historical as can be seen by this reformulation of it: how is it that the same subversive process may be later construed as contributing to either revolutionary change or anarchic disintegration? Conceptual clarification of necessity involves historical enquiry and vice versa. Materialist and historicist criticism can go some way towards clarifying these questions by distinguishing different though inter-related cultural processes; following Raymond Williams (in *Marxism and Literature*) we can identify dominant, residual and emergent cultures and go on to include also those which are subordinate and marginalized. What emerges from such analysis is a view of history and society as far less unified than the prevailing preoccupation with power tends to allow; we begin to see the struggles which constitute history, struggles not just between the rulers and the ruled but also between the rulers. One direction in which Goldberg's excellent study could be extended is towards the disclosure of how the contradictions he addresses involve cultural struggle and historical change. This would not necessarily disregard subjectivity. Goldberg observes that it was in public life that Renaissance man went to know himself: "Privacy opposes this pervasive public sphere, but we could say, only as absence is opposed to presence. In the seventeenth century, privacy all but merged into the public" (p. 150). This is well put but I'd be inclined to put it slightly differently: subjectivity was not the antithesis of social process but its focus, with the consequence that the material and ideological conditions which informed identity were represented along with—indeed within—it. The complex and inconsistent protagonists of its drama speak not only the contradictions by which power is maintained but also those through which it is contested; their transgressive acts meet with reciprocal violence and power is ruptured from within by the same violence which maintains it. In the ensuing struggle its strategies are demystified.

It was in relation to *Measure for Measure*, for example, that I wanted more. Goldberg finds in this play the same crucial link between politics and literature in the Jacobean period, namely representation. He reads it in terms of substitution, replacement and representation and finds it full of paradox and ambiguity. Yet if we really want to talk of politics and power in relation to this play, maybe we should come at it differently. What kind of struggle is authority engaged in and with whom? What does its low-life transgression signify? Does that transgression really tend towards the social disintegration which the authorities (and not a few critics) claim, or, more positively, does it signify the ludic carnivalesque subversion of repressive authority? We might resist both these interpretations, seeing it instead as the behavior of a disassociated and powerless group who are being scapegoated in a process of authoritarian reaction. Lechery, in this view, is not what authority is afraid of,

but that which it demonises in order to relegitimate itself. I wouldn't want to simplify the struggle in *Measure for Measure*, and nor would I deny that it's a struggle conducted through representation. But the struggle is more than its representations and if we concentrate exclusively on the latter we misplace the struggle. This is paradoxical but not surprising: it's in the nature of ideological representation to efface struggle. If we go on asking the kinds of questions I've indicated, we are led inescapably to a history which is at once mediated, constituted and repressed through representation. We're likely to be led also to the divergences as well as the similarities between the representations of the dominant order and those of the theatre in Jacobean England; it's certainly true, for example, that what establishment representations repressed the theatre sometimes re-presented.

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Inside Herbert's Narratives

Costly Monuments: Representations of the Self in George Herbert's Poetry by Barbara Leah Harman. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982. Pp. xiv 225. \$17.50.

The immediate effect which a careful reading of Barbara Harman's *Costly Monuments* had on me was to send me back to a rereading of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*. This is a remarkable effect for a book on George Herbert to have, and it points directly to the special strengths and difficulties of Harman's book. The author brings a powerful set of contemporary concerns to bear on Herbert's poetry—"self" is a central term in recent philosophical and literary studies, and "representation" is a central literary, philosophical, and semiotic concern. Harman is deeply serious about these issues and she often writes about them with a passion and intelligence worthy of Arendt. The issues dominate her book. The poems sometimes respond remarkably to Harman's concerns, but she is ultimately more committed to her own framework than that of the poems. When the frameworks truly mesh, the result is usable and transferable insight; when the mesh is less than perfect, the result is powerful meditation that cuts athwart or beside the text. It would be wrong to suggest that Harman's framework is entirely arbitrary in relation to Herbert. Certainly "self" and the representation of it are issues in the poetry.

What Harman looks for in Herbert's poems is the way in which a "human story" is told in them by a first-person narrator (p. 35), the way in which, as she says, "speakers represent their experiences" in the poems (p. 215 n. 1). Harman is less interested, therefore, in the overall meaning of a Herbert poem than in a particular aspect of the poem and in the way in which the overall meaning relates to that aspect. She is interested in versions of autobiography in the poems—not because she is interested in Herbert's life but because she is interested in the general question of self-disclosure in (written) narrative. By a "human story" in the poems, she means an account of experi-

ence within the general conditions of human life. Harman's sense of these general conditions is what she derives from Arendt. *The Human Condition*, however, as Arendt is at pains to make clear, is tragic and relentlessly secular in its perspective. The result of Harman's Arendtian presentation of the human condition and her modern understanding of the meaning and value of "the self" is that the positive dimensions of the religious content and structure of Herbert's poems tend to be either downplayed or presented as bought at a very great price (the "cost" in Harman's title).

Within the history of recent criticism of Herbert's poetry, Harman can be described as combining a version of what Helen Vendler values in the poetry with a version of how Stanley Fish sees the poems as working. Her lengthy introduction characterizes "the critical controversy" about Herbert as centering on the issue of tradition and the individual talent, though Harman quite usefully wishes to put the issue in less literary and more psychocultural terms. The controversy turns on the degree to which Herbert is to be seen as striving to differentiate himself from cultural norms and, more sharply, on the question of whether the cultural norms themselves are to be viewed as hospitable or inhospitable to the development of individual selfhood. Harman elegantly demonstrates that Summers, Fish, and Lewalski, like Tuve before them, all assume that culture "determines the possibilities for selfhood and textuality" (p. 25) in a fairly strong sense, while Vendler, like Empson before her, stresses the individual's power over the materials of his culture. Harman aims to present a balanced or "dialectical" view in which both individuality and cultural norms have shaping power (p. 30). She shrewdly criticizes Fish for allowing the dialectic promised in the title of his chapter on Herbert in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* to turn into a dissolving rather than an interplay of differences. She does not, however, succeed in presenting a "resolutely dialectical" view. Since she agrees with Fish's sense of the power and *inhospitableness* of the dominant ideology of Herbert's culture, Harman for the most part produces a view in which what she means by dialectic is postponed or dramatically represented dissolution.

One of Harman's main contributions to the task of supplementing or refining Fish's view is her identification of a new genre or subgenre within Herbert's lyrics, that of the "collapsing" poem. Her book as a whole is divided into sections on three such subgenres: part one, chapters 1-3, on "collapsing" poems; part two, chapters 4-5, on poems Harman considers truly "dissolving"; and a conclusion on poems with "the Bible as countertext" to the autobiographical narrative. Harman's most acute formal observations concern "collapsing" poems, those in which a speaker "bears a disturbed relationship" to his own narrative of personal experience (p. 35). Her focus on the place of narrative within Herbert's lyrics leads her to the striking insight that the positive alternatives to the foolish behavior depicted in poems like "Jordan" (II) and "The Collar" are either non-narratively or minimally represented. Her awareness of the normal "conditions and limits" of autobiography lead her to an excellent sense of the *oddness* of "Affliction" (I) as an autobiography.

These insights, however, are "costly." In order to get the collapsing effect, Harman must take the narrative portions of the poems en bloc. She can barely take note of the development and shifts within the quoted speech of

"The Collar" and cannot fully acknowledge the way in which the ending of "The Collar" does not *suddenly* render obsolete the notion "that the interior speaker is in control of his own voice" (p. 80). She must take the narrative portion of "Affliction" (I), lines 1-55, as "a chronological sequence," a "complete" account with a coherent form and genuine resolution, in order to see the speaker as rejecting closure and coherent autobiography rather than as ineffectively longing for them. Yet lines 1-55 of "Affliction" (I) present an incoherent rather than a coherent account (the speaker keeps summarizing and retelling his story), and the final lines of the narrative section—"Now I am here, what thou wilt do with me / None of my books will show"—manifest not "full consciousness" (p. 97) but total puzzlement. These lines do not point to the Byronic theme of "the incompatibility of life and full consciousness" but rather to the difficulty of proceeding with life in such a puzzled state. The riddling conclusion of "Affliction" (I), "Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot, / Let me not love thee, if I love thee not," represents not "resistance to closure" but precisely the opposite, a passionate desire for it—even at the price of damnation or annihilation.

This last example suggests the extent to which Harman's premises dominate her readings. Of course it is true that all readings are guided by premises, but the premises involved need not be as intrusive and imperious as Harman's. At times her premises lead her into straightforward misreadings. She takes the quoted speech in "The Collar" as expressing "opposition to life in a world that fails to acknowledge the speaker's presence" (p. 69) but the line she quotes—"Have I no bayes to crown it?"—sees the problem as the speaker's inability to acknowledge the world's presence. The hostility or indifference of "the world" (conceived of ontologically, not morally) is a premise of Harman's view of the human condition; it must be part of the "human story" in the poems. Harman's sense of the "monumental hostility" of the world (p. 43) carries with it a parallel sense of the value of the individual historically manifested self. This latter premise leads Harman to see "the impulse toward self-representation, toward appearance in the world" as one that Herbert "honors" (p. 83) rather than as one that Herbert dramatized as an inevitable and lamentable consequence of fallen life. She never fully comes to terms with the possibility that Herbert connected selfhood with sinfulness, and that his purpose in creating the various narratives of error and pride in the poems is primarily monitory on the one hand and consolatory on the other (consolatory in that "dejected poor souls" will see that even the regenerate habitually fall into sin). The idea that Herbert saw sin, error, and folly as the sources of narrative would allow for many of Harman's insights while preventing her from reversing Herbert's values.

Harman's major reversal of values is in her emphasis on "cost." Harman sees saving expense as costly. When Herbert gives up narrative for action, vision, or celebration, Harman insists on the "cost" involved. Like Fish, she cannot allow for happy endings. The ending of "The Holdfast," for instance, is seen as "costly" (p. 55); the ending of "The Collar" must be "borne" (p. 86). The replacement of self-presentation by presentation of "another" in "Aaron" is at the speaker's "expense" (p. 187) even though the second stanza of the poem tells us exactly what Herbert sees himself as losing in giving up his individual identity—"Profaneness in my head, / Defects and

darknesse in my breast," etc. The most striking of Harman's refusals to be comforted occurs in regard to "The Pilgrimage." After some excellent comments on the way in which the speaker's narrative in this poem is overwhelmingly teleological, Harman introduces the final stanza with the remark that "the hill toward which the speaker is pitched is, in fact, no longer available inside the limits mapped by the narrator at the start." It would seem inevitable to conclude that the problem is precisely in "the limits mapped by the narrator at the start"—the idea that ultimate satisfaction is to be found in this world—but Harman's emphasis falls on the fact that since the "hill" in which the speaker should truly place his expectation is "on the other side of experience," access to it "becomes a complex matter indeed." Yet Herbert's point is the opposite: "death is fair, / And but a chair." Where Herbert stresses gaiety and ease, Harman stresses complexity and loss. Unlike Herbert, Harman cannot take death lightly.

In discussing "The Pilgrimage," I have shifted from a "collapsing" to a "dissolving" poem (in a note to the earlier version of her essay on "Affliction" [I], Harman had suggested another category, that of the "resurrected" poem, but this useful positive category has disappeared in the transition from article to book). The "dissolving" poem is primarily a thematic rather than a formal category. The clearest case is "Church-monuments," which is about the dissolution of the body. The relationship of "Church-monuments" to the issue of self in Herbert's poetry raises some central questions that Harman never confronts. What is the relation of the "self" to the body on the one hand and the soul on the other (not to mention "the heart")? This question could perhaps be answered historically—Richard Baxter, for instance, at the beginning of his *Treatise of Self-Denial* (1659) gives five different definitions of "the self"—but Harman never attempts this route. Unlike Fish in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* and Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Harman never defines what she means by "the self" (the closest to a definition we get is a quote from Greenblatt in a note to chapter 1). Harman never mentions the problem of the soul and she systematically equivocates on the relationship between the self and the body. Throughout most of her book, Harman uses "self" in the psychological or philosophical sense (first introduced into English by Locke?) to designate the subjective experience of personal identity. She also, however, seems to want to make a claim about the body. This term is a mystified one in her text. It is simply imported into the introductory discussion of "the critical controversy" (pp. 24–25) and later into the discussion of various poems (pp. 57, 111). Representation is frequently equated with "embodiment" (often portentously italicized), and "embodiment" in this semiotic sense is connected to material bodies through a series of associations (see pp. 111–12).

The body is a red herring in Harman's argument. The second of the chapters on "dissolving" poems (chapter 5) is entitled "The Dissolution of Bodies and Stories," and in reading this chapter it becomes clear that stories, not bodies, are the real focus of Harman's work. The chapter on material dissolution is an irrelevance. An analysis of "Church-monuments" that barely escapes being a reprise of Fish's is followed by an analysis of *Death's Duel* that is merely filler. Donne's final sermon does not "stand behind" Herbert's poem (p. 120) in any sense, either chronological ("Church-monuments" was

probably written before it) or conceptual (they are distinct variations on a very common theme). Harman treats only the first third of the sermon; she reads "the body of our building" backwards to mean "the building of our body"; and she uses Donne's reference to Catholic penitential theology, redeeming sins "by disciplines and mortifications, in way of satisfaction to the justice of God," as if he did not add "That will not serve, that is not the right way." The last third of the chapter is an analysis of Herbert's "Mortification," a poem that does not, with the exception of the stanza on old age, describe or evoke the dissolution of the body and that does *not* follow the body past the point of death. "Mortification" shows the way in which all the stages of life can be seen as foreshadowing the circumstances of death. Foreshadowing, not identification, is the mode, and, despite Harman's denial (p. 134), the portraits of the various stages of life are, as Arnold Stein shows, quite clearly differentiated. To say that what is remarkable about "Church-monuments" and "Mortification" is that they "embody disembodiment" is to create an apparent paradox merely through rhetorical sleight of hand.

When Harman returns from bodies to stories, her analyses recover their power. She imports bodies into some of these analyses—her dubious reading of "Where lay my heart" in "The Pilgrimage" creates the issue of "psychic wholeness" which is then reinterpreted as "a vision of corporeal unity" (p. 143); she sees "The Temper" (I) as treating "bodily instability" (p. 152)—but the shift back to her central issue of "what it means to be a self *and to have a story*" (p. 151; emphasis mine) allows her to give plausible readings of "The Temper" (I) and "Artillerie" and a superb reading of "The Flower." Whereas in many other cases, the poems do not truly seem to share Harman's concerns—it is not clear, for instance, that "The Holdfast" or "The Collar" are about "the impossibility of adequately representing the self in language" (p. 65)—"The Flower" does seem to suggest that the most normal ways of conceiving of and representing the self fail to capture the total reality of the self's situation vis à vis God. "The Flower" does, as Harman says, "reconstitute the very idea of being in the world" (p. 166), and it does offer a "vision of the self as both provisional and open to revision" (p. 161). Harman's comments on "flowers that glide" in the final stanza are truly helpful in seeing how this image can bear the weight of meaning it is obviously intended to have. This analysis demonstrates how rich and convincing the results can be when the critic's preoccupations and those of the text actually coincide.

Harman's final chapter is her one serious attempt at historicizing her discussion, at actually creating some sense of Herbert's culture (her attempts in the notes throughout at broadening the literary scope of her discussion are not, by and large, convincing—see p. 240 n.17 on Southwell and p. 207 n. 3 on Sidney). In the final chapter, Harman rightly sees biblical materials as relevant to a Protestant poet's self-representation in the period. Apart from importing the issue of what Arendt called "the web of relationships" into "The Bunch of Grapes," insisting on "cost" in "The Bunch of Grapes" and "Aaron," and importing the body into "The Altar," the readings offered in this chapter are straightforward and plausible, and that of "The H. Scriptures" (I) is excellent. Harman's main effort in this chapter, however, is to use some of Lewalski's historical scholarship to undermine one of Lewalski's

main conclusions. To Lewalski's claim that Protestant typological theory allowed Herbert to "personalize theology," Harman rejoins that "a typological reading established the relationship of persons to Scripture by transforming entirely—not by conserving or valorizing—the idea of individual space." Typology, says Harman, "does not 'personalize theology'; it theologizes the personal, and makes unavailable the very notion of a 'radically personal' account" (p. 189). This is Harman at her most challenging. There is an insight here. There is also something wrong with the terms in which it is expressed. The idea of "individual space" that the Protestant typological theory is seen as undermining is perhaps an anachronistic one, and there is no doubt, historically, that Protestant theology, especially in its Puritan and Dissenting forms, led to a great outpouring in England and America of works of personal record. This theology did valorize individual experience by encouraging ordinary Christians to see the great patterns of biblical experience worked out in their own lives; it provided the "sanction" for autobiography that Harman elsewhere says Herbert lacked (p. 105). In the more Calvinist of the autobiographies and the more elaborate ones, the patterns do not eliminate the details; the typological relationship remains historical. Harman is right, however, to point out that the pattern can overwhelm the details as well as authorize them. This is an area to which the distinction between dissolution and dialectic is truly relevant. A poem like "The Bunch of Grapes" is indeed "resolutely dialectical."

Harman's is not a familiar *kind* of book, and it is not a book for all tastes. It is closer in mode to Said's *Beginnings* or to some of Hartman's essays than to any other book on Herbert. It is an "experiment in criticism" as well as a book on Herbert, and I have perhaps treated it too much as the latter. Harman's basic mode is philosophical. Yet her book does have a place in Herbert studies. It is the first work to give sustained attention to the place of narrative within Herbert's lyrics—surely of their most striking features. Harman's attempts to distinguish kinds of narrative in the poems and to think about the functions of narrative in the poems are certainly laudable, as is her attempt to imagine her way into the implied or experienced worlds of Herbert's narrators. Her work should lead us to pay closer attention to the conditions of narrative in Herbert and to those moments in the poetry when narrative is interrupted, superseded, or replaced with other forms of discourse. And Harman is right to raise the question of narrative in relation to those of selfhood and autobiography. Whatever one ultimately thinks about the conclusions and particular terms of Harman's study, the questions she raises are certainly good ones. Grappling with Harman's book can only be productive—for Herbert studies and, perhaps, for the general study of narrative accounts of personal experience.

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Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye, edited by Eleanor Cook, Chaviva Hosek, Jay Macpherson, Patricia Parker and Julian Patrick. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. Pp. x + 346. \$30.00.

The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare's Problem Comedies by Northrop Frye. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. Pp. viii + 90. \$4.95.

A nostalgic aura surrounds these books. They reflect not only the end of one critic's career. They also reflect the end of one kind of criticism. More poignantly still, they reflect the end of a distinctive way of being a critic. The genial tone, the genteel manner, and the generous spirit (not unmixed with pointed irony): all these qualities associated with the work of Northrop Frye, the gentleman theorist par excellence, are souvenirs of a style of critical production no longer available to us in the profession now. Why this is so has to do with the very success of Frye's project, its tremendous influence on American critics during the nineteen fifties and sixties, the authority of its example to inspire or provoke others to quest for a sublime achievement in literary theory equal to or surpassing Frye's own monumental work, the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Ironically enough, those who emulated Frye's systematic ambitions did not possess his genius for lucid schematization, and so produced isolated insights and occasional grand rhetoric but no great house of the critical spirit. Even more to the point, Frye's visionary criticism, besides inspiring the revisionary antics of Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, and Angus Fletcher (among others), has also inspired many students to enter a profession for which most Americans increasingly fail to see a need. One can say, then, that Frye's influence has been great precisely in proportion to how devastating it has been, a power to create as it destroys, and vice versa. Such savage irony seems more fitting for an era of Nietzsche and post-structuralist discourse than Frye's speculative humanism ever could be.

Of these two books, *Centre and Labyrinth* is the more useful. (*The Myth of Deliverance* promises to be a significant addition to Frye's theory of comedy found in the *Anatomy* and *A Natural Perspective*, but it fails to deliver on its promise. But more of this book later). The editors have assembled twenty essays, all of which betray Frye's influence and some of which even discuss it and his work. Of the latter, Paul Ricoeur's "*Anatomy of Criticism or the Order of Paradigms*" is the most philosophically serious and critically enlightening. Ricoeur argues that Frye's theoretical "system" should not be considered akin to the project of French Structuralism—a view of Frye originally popularized by Geoffrey Hartman in "Ghostlier Demarcations: The Sweet Science of Northrop Frye" in *Beyond Formalism* (1970). (Hartman's own contribution here has little to do with the argument of that essay or with Frye). Rather, Ricoeur contends, Frye's work should be considered in the context of a revised Aristotelianism, in which poetic forms arise from energy seeking its fullest and most natural expression. In this light, the various schema of the *Anatomy* (the order of the paradigms of the title), the five modes of literary texts (myth, romance, high mimetic, low mimetic, satire or irony) and the five phases of the literary symbol (literal, descriptive, formal, archetypal, anagogic) and all the other machines for criticism are actually approximations in the critical idiom of the narrative structures and conventions of fiction. This makes Frye a visionary artist as well as a major theorist. While this view of Frye is familiar—it originates with Murray Krieger back in 1965 (see, *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism*)—the rigor and austerity with which Ricoeur

makes his case is truly remarkable. It is almost like Frye is our Sidney and perfect man, as seen by a latter-day, theoretical Racine.

Most of the other essays that use, invoke, or just mention Frye are not very memorable. And the contributions by Hartman (a reading of Keats's "Ode to Psyche") and by Helen Vendler (a reading of Keats's "To Autumn"), or those by Fletcher (a baroque meditation on "the image of lost direction"—the labyrinth—in the style of the Swiftian visionary crank of *A Tale of A Tub*) and by Bloom (a brooding gothic meditation on Freud's *Totem and Taboo*), while all of some interest, do not seem to honor Frye all that much. In this context, James Nohrberg's brilliant virtuoso performance, "*Paradise Regained* by One Greater Man: Milton's Wisdom Epic As a 'Fable of Identity,'" stands out as a major statement on the psychological, social, and philosophical vicissitudes and concerns that shape a poet's understanding and practice of his vocation.

I cannot do justice to Nohrberg's argument here. But I can offer a cento of choice morsels:

Virtually any period of extended vocational preparation may be seen as a time during which missteps or wrong choices must be avoided, as it were, in advance: *Paradise Lost* constitutes an extended meditation upon the premeditated nature of the genuine or deliberate act, and its subject was "long in choosing" (IX.26). The poem accordingly reconstructs the anteriority proper to the choice made in the Primal Choice, a story including the promotion of Christ, the fall of Satan, and the creation of the world. *Paradise Regained*, in its turn, re-creates the meditative anteriority necessary for the fulfilling of the poet's vocation in *Paradise Lost*. Within *Paradise Lost* itself, the creation of the world (in Book VII) follows upon the fall of Satan after his rebellion (in Book IV). The image of the poet as a fallen and blind Bellerophon, at the opening of Book VII, is the hinge between Fall and Creation. Similarly, the great creative act of Milton's life followed upon his blindness and the collapse of his hopes in a renewal of the creation—again, out of waste, deluge, and debacle. . . . The ego is first differentiated, then individualized. All earlier egos we can collect under the idea of a "nameable" ego, one able to feel its difference from the objects that consciousness intends, and able to identify parts, sensations, and perceptions as its own. All later egos we can collect under the ideas of a "vocational" ego, one embarked upon the project of individuation, choosing or fulfilling the meaning of its name. The first ego is imposed upon by objects of cognition and desire. Less peripherally, the second ego is imposed upon by its own will. Its ethos is changed from volup-tary to activist. . . . [In *Paradise Regained*] Christ exhibits obvious ego-strengths: a sense of self, self-control, possession, assurance, knowledge, and perfect poise. Satan is a weak ego: quixotic, servile, importunate, whining, and overweening. The vanquished cavalier of *Paradise Lost* has become a nagging and parasitical degenerate. Re-counting the Baptism, he finds it metrically expedient to omit the words "I" and "well" (in him am pleased," I.85): Satan's "I" is not "well," or whole (pp. 87 and 89).

Any one seriously interested in the vocation of writing, why and how writers realize they are writers and what course their careers can follow—an issue larger than deconstructive approaches to writing ever engage—will find this essay of permanent value.

In this connection, one of the striking features of the volume is the way Harold Bloom's contribution, on Freud, ends up, due to the oedipal shape and revisionary influence of his antithetical career, being read not only as an essay on *Totem and Taboo* but as a re-enactment of the ritual murder of the primal father first postulated there, with Frye placed in the familiar patriarchal role and slaughtered not directly through outright condemnation but via a repression so thorough-going that not a single word of Bloom's alludes openly to him, even as the entire essay as performance has Frye for its object. My point is really this: the institutional conventions of a collection of essays in honor of someone and those of the writing career of a contributor control reader expectation to the point where every essay, no matter how eccentrically revisionary the essay or strained the fit, does appear to fit after all. Such institutional forces are, strictly speaking, beyond the scope of Bloom's familial conception of influence as an anxiety-principle. In other words, Bloom, like the rest of us, could learn much from the kind of investigation that Nohrnberg is carrying on.

The Myth of Deliverance consists of three talks, originally given as the Tamblin Lectures at the University of Western Ontario, on Shakespeare's "problem comedies": *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. Nothing substantially new is added either to Frye's notions of comedy or to Shakespearean scholarship and criticism by this volume:

By deliverance, as something distinct from survival itself, I mean the expansion of consciousness or energy that we often expect or experience or hope for when we pass through a crisis of survival. . . . We notice that some words in religion, such as "conversion" in Christianity or *paravritti* (turning around) in Buddhism, or "revolution" in political ideology, emphasize the fact that one thing necessary is a reversing of the normal current of life. Other words, such as "enlightenment" or "salvation," emphasize rather the sense of recognition that accompanies this process. Reversal and recognition, then, seem to be structural principles outside literature, which suggests that a study of them inside literature may provide at least some interesting analogies to social concern from literature, and analogies that have become, as it were, distinct species and not merely derived varieties. . . . In most forms of comedy, . . . at least the New Comedy with which Shakespeare was mainly concerned, the emphasis is on a teleological plot, usually one with a mystery in it which is disclosed in or near a final recognition scene. The emphasis is not on sequence, but on moving toward a climax in which the end incorporates the beginning. The climax is a vision of deliverance or expanded energy and freedom. This may be expressed socially, individually, or in other ways, but however it is expressed, we normally have a vision of a group of people going off the stage or page to begin a new kind of life. As the audience is excluded from this new life, its quality is left undefined: we are, as a rule, simply told that they are going to be happy (pp. 12, 13, and 14).

This book, so dependent on Aristotle's ideas of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, (reversal and recognition), does lend support to Ricoeur's theory of Frye as a modern Aristotle who also writes critical fictions.

More to the point, the book also supports Nohrnberg's speculations on how central the idea of a career and its shape are to the production of certain works. For Frye, since the *Anatomy*, typically has produced three kinds of texts at fairly regular intervals: a book intended to be a major contribution to theoretical debate, such as *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*; a book of occasional pieces largely devoted to cultural and social issues, such as *Divisions on a Ground*; and, as here, a book of practical criticism. (Sometimes, as in *Fables of Identity* or *The Stubborn Structure*, all three kinds of critical texts are combined in a single volume). The imperatives of a particular career, the personal conventions of a writer as they interact with and respond to the more general conventions of a genre or a discipline, thus determine far more than one may suspect the production of a particular text, certainly, as in the case of Milton's *Paradise Regained* or Bloom's "Reading Freud: Transference, Taboo, and Truth" or, most ruefully and poignantly of all, Frye's *Myth of Deliverance*, far more than any questions of intrinsic argumentative worth. But, perhaps, with the publication of the second volume of his work on the Bible and literature, Northrop Frye will be able to conclude his theoretical career on a better note.

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For permission to reprint material in this volume, Bernth Lindfors thanks the editors of the following journals: *Ba Shiru*, *English in Africa*, *International Fiction Review*, *Journal of African Studies*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *Kiabàrà*, *Komparatistische Hefte*, *Kunapipi*, *Literary Half-Yearly*, and *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities*. It is hardly the list of publications that most readers concerned with modern criticism have come to expect. Lindfors' book may serve as a useful reminder that while many theoreticians have written about fewer and fewer literary texts from the older European tradition, numbers of vigorous "literatures," frequently written in renewed versions of the western European languages, have arisen all over the world in former colonial areas. An increasing number of writers, teachers, and scholars, native and foreign, recognize that something important is happening.

"Early Nigerian Literature" refers largely to the literature of the 1950's and '60's. (Nigeria achieved independence in 1960. Most of the earlier literature was oral rather than written, tribal or colonial rather than "Nigerian.") Neither an introduction nor an attempt at a survey, Lindfors' book is a series of essays that explore how several of the writers (D. O. Fagunwa, Amos Tutuola, C. O. D. Ekwensi, Onuora Nzekwu, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka,

Christopher Okigbo) began to write, and what those earlier, sometimes "pre-literary," writings indicate about their origins and aims.

A number of them began at what may strike us as odd places. D. O. Fagunwa (the only writer discussed who does not write his major works in English: Lindfors, like most of us, must depend on translations from the Yoruba) seems to have started with an individual combination of Yoruba folklore, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *The Faerie Queene*; but it was his rhetorical energy and inventiveness, at least partly derived from oral tradition, that established him as one of the most influential of Nigerian writers and made his fictions surpass Tutuola's. (Soyinka has translated one work as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* [1968].) If anyone is tempted to dismiss a writer in Yoruba as intrinsically of only small importance, Lindfors reminds us that "there are as many Yorubas today as there are Australians and three or four times as many as there are Norwegians" (p. 23); and Fagunwa's influence has extended beyond the Yorubas.

Cyprian Ekwensi, by contrast, "was obviously stimulated primarily by English and American pulp fiction and fourth-rate motion pictures" (p. 8). He has published copiously works ranging from school readers to "rural regionalist" (p. 42) stories and novels in various tribal settings, writings as a "big-city reporter" (p. 42), radio broadcasts, crime fictions, adaptations of westerns, etc. He has improved his control of English since his earliest market publications; but if his results are sometimes still sub- or semi-literary, he is often more impressive than his original English and American popular models because of the sense that, like Defoe, he is in some sense staking out new territory. He is weakest when most derivative. "Flashes of local color, no matter how authentic, cannot convert Billy the Kid or Sinbad the Sailor into a convincing Hausa Mallam" (p. 55).

The most important writers here are Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. Lindfors argues that their work, like that of most of their contemporaries, does not begin primarily with Fagunwa, Tutuola, Ekwensi, or their sources, but with their own undergraduate writings in the papers and magazines of their schools and universities. Those writings were frequently as "sophomoric" as most such writings elsewhere, but in them their authors learned to address a specific audience with both individual and common concerns: "They started by attempting to communicate with their peers in a literary idiom they thought educated readers would appreciate. They were writers of a highbrow popular literature" (p. 90). Lindfors reprints many of the early pieces; although they are usually literarily negligible, I find them genetically fascinating. Both Achebe and Soyinka already show wit as well as strong feeling, but major differences appear: Achebe sometimes sounds like an astonishingly literate and humane anthropologist, capable both of coolly rational judgment and imaginative sympathy; Soyinka frequently writes in what Lindfors calls his "hit-and-run joking style" (p. 134), "trying to corral bellylaughs" (p. 129). One could not anticipate from these early fragments that Achebe would become one of his century's major novelists nor that Soyinka should become an important dramatist; but the quality of Achebe's imagination is already apparent, as is Soyinka's rhetorical inventiveness and gift for dialogue.

There is little here of Soyinka's later concern with myth (only an amusing

parody which he passed off as a translation), and nothing of his "clothing his cleverness in obscurity or vague, resonant symbols" (p. 136). One wonders about the relation between some of the later developments and his study at Leeds with G. Wilson Knight, the political chaos and sufferings of the Biafran war, and the imprisonment he described in *The Man Died*. There was a time when Soyinka seemed intent on suppressing any evidence of his playfulness and laughter. One can only rejoice that both are marvelously back again in *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (1981), one of the most delightful memoirs I have ever read.

Lindfors remarks that the importance of these undergraduate writings "in Soyinka studies is that it gives us a bird's eye view of the vitality, exuberance, and intellectual energy that animated this extraordinary young man long before he developed into a full-fledged writer" (p. 122). Lindfors' judgment is both accurate and important, and we should not be distracted by that phrase "Soyinka studies," with its reminder of how rapidly these days literary studies become "professional" or even bureaucratic. After all, "Soyinka studies" flourish on at least three continents, and there are monographs in French, German, and Russian as well as English. Despite our usual insistence in this country that all the literature in English worth studying must be either "English" (or at best "British") or "American," it may well be that in a decade or so "Soyinka studies" will come to seem less odd, even here, than many other such phrases—"Mailer studies," say—or even "Nabokov studies."

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