

2001

Book Review

Criticism Editors

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism>

Recommended Citation

Editors, Criticism (2001) "Book Review," *Criticism*: Vol. 43: Iss. 1, Article 5.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism/vol43/iss1/5>

The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium by Gilberto Perez. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. Pp. 448. \$35.00 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

During his invigorating discussion of Jean-Luc Godard, Gilberto Perez remarks, "through the concreteness of art . . . *Vivre sa vie* addresses large matters with dispassionate intensity" (352). A bit later, in the persuasive appreciation of Antonioni that concludes *The Material Ghost*, he makes a related observation: "Declining the governing stance of superior knowledge usual in storytelling, his camera explores rather than governs, inquires rather than tells" (378). The sort of art that Perez admires keeps its distance while retaining its sympathy, opens its eyes to the chaos and difficulty of human life without ceasing to aspire to a more orderly, accommodating world. It's a cinema that asks rather than tells, or tells only to reconsider. Such is also the critical practice of Perez in his fertile, dispassionately intense thinking about films and film.

When Perez addresses himself to a movie, he is fully absorbed in it and unpreoccupied by doctrine or methodology. He writes not to throttle dissent with a "definitive" interpretation or to dismiss a film to the landfill of the politically incorrect, but to invite conversation with his own apt and imaginative thought. He raises questions eloquently, but his answers do not so much end discussion as open it wider, allow for more or better questions. "The sense of beauty is nothing if not hopeful, nothing if not a reaching, if not the sparkle of an aspiration" (413). His assertions about cinematic beauty are not uncomplicated, but he explicitly eschews the simplistically cynical attitude that the beautiful, whatever it may be, serves as little more than a tool for inculcating ideology, that it has become another opiate for the oppressed masses.

A wide-ranging book, *The Material Ghost* is nonetheless a concentrated piece of critical and theoretical writing, one that will reward attentive rereading. It reminds one of an understanding of the humanities that used to be accepted as common wisdom—at least before every assistant professor's candidacy for tenure required "evidence that he or she has produced research that will significantly affect thinking in her/his area." Humanists, because of the breadth and antiquity of their field, would normally be expected to do their best, most original work from their mid-forties through their sixties. Perez's writing has the consistent, compact wisdom that comes for most mortals only after a few decades of careful, disciplined, committed thought. If it looks back to the 1960s and '70s, it also accounts for much that was best and worst in film and film studies in the '80s and '90s, and it will be provocative and enlightening for at least the next two or three decades. Like most of the movies it concerns itself with, it will have legs.

The Material Ghost consists of an "Introduction" and ten substantial chapters. Its many frame enlargements are exceptionally well chosen to illustrate its arguments. "Film and Physics," the introduction, acquaints us with both the author—"The Havana where I grew up was a great town for going to the

movies”—and his approach to film. Perez is cosmopolitan by background, education, and temperament. He doesn't so much resist as ignore the USA-centered parochialism of much recent academic film criticism; for what he calls film's "reporting from elsewhere . . . tidings in the form of images," circulates throughout the world, not just within a country or two. As to his approach, it fuses the general and the specific; it is "film criticism consistently drawn to theory" (15). Thoroughly informed by and about academic film studies, Perez nonetheless remains oppositional and revisionist, "consistently drawn to theory but as consistently skeptical of what these days is called 'theory'" (15).

The first two chapters, "The Documentary Image" and "The Narrative Sequence," are the most consistently theoretical. Yet Perez's generalizations rarely appear to precede the data to which they apply; rather, they arise from it. The opening chapters are full of descriptions and interpretations—always acute and usually convincing—of the movies of Riefenstahl, de Sica, Buñuel, and Flaherty; of Porter, Griffith, Renoir, Ophuls, and many others. As these names suggest, Perez remains an auteurist, though by no means the judgmental amateur psychoanalyst that the word is sometimes assumed to describe. Perez is "not interested in the personalities of Capra, McCarey, and Hawks as the auteur theory prescribes, but [in] their art . . . on the screen" (11). Predictably, he has little patience with film academics whose rejection of auteurism he sees as being based on "a repudiation of all individuality as a false consciousness inculcated by bourgeois ideology" (4).

From his experience of movies, Perez has educed an understanding of film that prefers "both/and" to "either/or." The theorists to whom he turns for support and illustration exemplify his inclusiveness; among them are Aristotle and Barthes, Cavell and Derrida, Robert Warshaw and André Bazin, Plato and Charles Sanders Pierce. The medium of motion pictures embodies for Perez a balanced in-betweenness: "Between documentary and fiction, camera and projector, index and icon, absence and presence, past and present, narrative and drama, material and ghost, the film medium seeks its poise" (49). But not between reality and representation, for everything about a movie is necessarily the product of an artificer, and even "on-the-scene" news reporting achieves only "a specious credibility" (30). Fiction films and documentaries that do not conceal their makers' hands, however, tell no lies because they claim no truths.

To be between is also to be in the middle, and for Perez fiction films are very much the core of his enterprise. He reinvigorates the tradition from Aristotle to Northrop Frye that puts at the center of the humanities imaginative work, which is by its nature more universal than history and more concrete and vivid than philosophy. Perez's study of *Films and Their Medium* supplies much lively film history and theory, but as the title promises, movies themselves occupy the high-definition focus of his gaze. The theorists to whom he turns most often, Cavell and Bazin, reflect his preference for inductive approaches that emerge from personal experience.

As a theorist of motion pictures in his own right, Perez often clarifies or extends his predecessors. Broadly speaking, he regards all art as mimesis; and he maintains that even at their most realistic, motion pictures imitate rather than reproduce. Expanding and making more precise the formulations of Bazin and Cavell, Perez declares that “the out of frame is not a fact . . . but a convention, a creation of film technique, in most cases not what was actually there out of range of the camera’s picturing but what we are to accept as being there in the space off screen” (137). For anyone who has been present on or even seen pictures of a movie set, this statement will be self-evident, but it has important consequences, for it cuts the tie that is often innocently postulated between unmediated reality and the cinematographic image. Similarly, the camera does not embody or achieve a gaze; rather it “enacts the fiction of a perceiving eye . . . imitates a gaze, a point of view, an act of perception and of consciousness” (225). Modernism, a critical topic that sometimes seems nigh played out, remains for Perez fundamentally a “problematic matter” and therefore productive of illuminating insight. “Modern art,” he remarks, “declares its means not because they are its only subject but in order to put them in question, because it feels it cannot take its assumptions for granted in its search after truth” (261). Although the unity art appears to achieve “may be an illusion in many cases and even a deception, [it] is in other cases better described as an aspiration” (304). Accepting that the makers of modernist cinema practice in good faith, Perez concludes that the self-reflexivity so nearly obsessive in Godard and kindred spirits is not narcissism, fraud, or self-evasion. Rather, “the undisguised formative process . . . comes to stand for the endeavor to find, the striving to construct, an order in the world: the making of art, not as art’s chief subject, but as an allegory of the ordering of life” (357).

For all of its abundant and persuasive notations on theory, the chief glory of *The Material Ghost* resides in its eloquent commentaries on the movies and filmmakers Perez understands so well. The discussion of *Nanook of the North* that ends the second chapter debunks Flaherty’s debunkers and returns an enriched understanding of that remarkable movie. The third chapter is devoted to Buster Keaton, and its title, “The Bewildered Equilibrist,” reflects not only a brilliant comprehension of that brilliant comedian-director, but also much of Perez’s apprehension of film itself. Vernon Shetley has declared it to be the best writing ever on Keaton (cf. *College English*, March 1999). Like all the filmmakers that Perez especially admires, Keaton “looks at life with perpetually questioning eyes” (121). His puzzlement informs his camera, his marvelous plots, his animated interactions with objects, and his paradoxically expressive deadpan gaze. The subject of the next chapter is mostly Murnau’s *Nosferatu*—for itself, as an especially illuminating work in its director’s oeuvre, and in its context in film history. All three perspectives reveal a great deal about the film, its influential director, and its cinematic forebears and progeny. Perhaps the

most glorious pastoral elegy ever created on movie film, Dovzhenko's *Earth* anchors the broad-ranging chapter on Soviet cinema and its international contexts. The eloquence of the writing is equal to the eloquence of the movie; Perez's commentary moved James Naremore to "mourn the fact that James Agee is no longer alive to appreciate its lengthy treatment" (cf. *Cineaste* 24.4, 1999). On Renoir, Perez is precise and persuasive; his discussion of *A Day in the Country*, the larger part of his sixth chapter, is among the most luminous and humane writing on film that I have ever encountered. "American Tragedy" puts together what Perez, following Warshaw, considers to be the two most American film of genres, the Western and the gangster movie. For Perez they are both political genres, the former as romantic allegory, the latter as ironic realism. This chapter, solid and useful, would be more notable in a less dazzling book. The longest chapter at 76 pages, "History Lessons" takes its name from the Huillet-Straub film of that title—a film and a directorial team likely to be little known to most American readers (none of their movies is currently available on video in the United States). Perez's detailed description also serves as the occasion for a series of typically compact, sensible meditations on modernist art in general. The last two chapters, dispassionately passionate excursions on Godard and Antonioni, end *The Material Ghost* on a high point. Perez's appreciation for Godard's late movies is especially convincing; since they have been heretofore difficult or impossible to see in the United States, one hopes that his writing will eventually catch the interest of distributors. "An Antonioni film weaves a texture of incompleteness, partial views of arresting partiality, empty spaces, narrative pauses, spaces between . . ." (368). Perez's articulations of those spaces makes them, as he writes, "heedful" without papering them over. In Antonioni and Godard and in modernism generally, Perez finds what he most admires, "an unsettled position both involved and estranged" (371). Film and literary theory of the '70s and '80s embraced such unsettled positions, yet the stock of the filmmakers who embodied them—among them Godard and Antonioni—suffered a prolonged decline. Perhaps indeterminacy is easier to talk of in the abstract than to analyze concretely. However that may be, Perez's inspired explications serve as models for such analysis and suggest that the time has come for European modernist filmmakers, so exalted a generation ago, to return from the margins of film studies.

In order to give rave reviews increased plausibility, rhetorical tradition requires that the reviewer find something to express reservations about—that one praise, as it were, with faint damnation. Deferring to that tradition, I offer the following. Without weakening his book, Perez might have suppressed some of his crabbiness about academic film studies in general and about a "simplistic interpreter in semiotic garb" in particular; but I'll confess that I took guilty pleasure in most of his zingers and understand the provocations

that led to them. On a slightly more serious note, I think that Perez, like virtually all cineastes, is credulous about the “fidelity” of still photography to the exterior reality it presumably transmits with minimal intervention. He does not, as I have noted, show such credulity about the cinema. Photographers make too many image-affecting decisions to support this confidence in the objectivity of the camera or to justify our trust in its secure connection to the world. Film stocks, black-and-white and color, respond differently to visible light and some also respond to light invisible to human eyes. Different lenses give different appearances, whether because of focal length, contrast and accutance, or sharpness of focus. Various developers lead to images of different texture, contrast, and color; and filtration can sharply alter the balance of color films and the contrast and monochrome translation of black and white ones. Shutter speed can, as we say, make all the difference in the world. Aspect ratios are infinitely variable. And now, digital alteration of images can change pretty much everything. We ought to abandon the idea that photography “has a necessary material connection with reality” (34), or at least recognize its fundamental uselessness. Having said that, I note that few of Perez’s theoretical statements depend upon a naïve view of photography.

Even in the cause of credibility, it is difficult to find much to complain of in *The Material Ghost*, more difficult to limit one’s rehearsal of its manifold virtues. It is as fine a book on film as I have ever encountered, a *hypermarché* of insight, precise and lovely writing, information, and clear thinking. Page after page elaborates arguments so acute and aptly formulated that I have no doubt I’ll be exploiting them in the classroom and in writing for the rest of my career. Two final examples, both having to do with directors’ handling of the camera: “De Sica’s camera loves his characters not because they are good or beautiful or admirable but because they are. The love it shows is not eros, the love of the desirable, but agape, the kind of love God bestows on his creatures” (35). Describing Godard’s close-ups of Anna Karina, Perez recalls the adoring portrait of the heroine in *Way Down East*: when Griffith “focused his camera on the face of Lillian Gish, he composed close-ups that are perhaps the most beautiful in existence. Whereas close-ups nearly always take their proximity for granted, these don’t; rather they treat it as something indeed remarkable, a privilege, a gesture of genuine intimacy” (350).

However packed with such incidental delights as *The Material Ghost* is, and however complex and far-faring its argument may be, Perez’s book never wanders out of sight of its controlling theses concerning the nature of movies and the stuff they’re made of. About the movies of which he writes so sympathetically and perceptively, and about the medium of cinema in general, any reader of this book will learn a precious lot. Densely woven and long as it is, I never found it obscure nor wished it shorter. On the contrary.

Lesley Brill
Wayne State University



Hegel After Derrida, edited by Stuart Barnett. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. Pp. x + 356. \$85.00 cloth; \$29.99 paper.

We will never be done, says Derrida, with the reading of Hegel. When we think we have gotten beyond Hegel in trumpeting our escape from the strictures of reason, teleology, metanarratives, idealism, we are most Hegelian. Yet we frequently find, even in the most theoretically naïve works, claims to have “deconstructed” prevalent interpretations or notions of reason, identity, consciousness, nature and the natural, morality, history, and so forth. Such trends may lead us to believe that we are done with Hegel, but, as Barnett says and this volume demonstrates, not only does Hegel define “the modernity that our postmodern era seeks to escape” (1), but there is a Hegel that we have yet to examine. Nowhere is this more true than in the present calls to deal with the strategies of representation in literature and the concomitant theses that culture is a signifying system and knowledge is regulated by the material interests of institutional powers. We would be hard pressed to find a questioning of the grounds of representation and technicity, concepts that lie at the heart of culture and institution. For this, we would do well to follow the example of these writers and turn to Derrida’s reading of what remains of Hegel in our thought today.

Those unfamiliar with Hegel will find these essays challenging, but they disclose the Hegelianism that dominates the American critical scene and provide models of rigorous readings that we can call for the sake of convenience “deconstruction.” Just what deconstruction is still remains obscure for many. Sometimes confused with critique, at other times reduced to the absurdity of being unconcerned with truth, deconstruction has entered the vocabulary as something of a ghost, to borrow a figure from Derrida frequently invoked in this collection: its presence is felt but its features remain obscure. One reason for this ghostly presence is our refusal, or inability, to confront Hegel, whom Derrida calls in *Of Grammatology* “the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing” (26). Hegel, says Barnett, “taught philosophers to examine all fields of knowledge as quasi-autonomous language games. . . . Yet Hegel emphasized the cultural and historical specificity of language games; he also devoted a good deal of his thought to dissecting the internal logic of various language games” (5) These games, then, are not mere games. Hegel narrates the unfolding of spirit in world history and its culmination in the Absolute, but he also historicizes reason, charting its contradictions and limitations. He is both the philosopher of unitary reason and the thinker of difference. Ultimately, it is the role of the negative in speculative idealism, the

otherness operating within reason, that makes Hegel's philosophy the limit that defines the modernity our postmodernity remains within.

In its confrontation with speculative idealism and the *Aufhebung* (a term that designates the negation, conservation, and elevation of a previous stage in consciousness), deconstruction is "to disrupt the virtual self-realization of onto-theology in speculative idealism" (26). This disruption is not critique, the investigation of the criteria for philosophy, for it is not a work of making distinctions and judgments (in a Kantian sense) but a questioning of these very categories. Deconstruction operates from within the text, responds to its irreducible alterity. If Hegel's text, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in particular, can be characterized as the totalizing thought of absolute spirit, Derrida's "text" can be defined as structurally infinite, a network without boundaries or closure. Rodolphe Gasché has demonstrated that what Derrida calls a text, which is traditionally understood as consisting of sensible signs and their intelligible content, is a "law" made up of the system of quasi-transcendentals (iterability, *différance*, the re-mark, etc.) that governs the relation between inside and outside, the ideal and the material. Derrida's "text" opens the self-identity implied in the traditional notion of the text by locating an unsublatable remainder that makes totalization impossible. The text, therefore, is governed by the traits of referral that make representation, self-reflection, and reference possible (impossibilities). This remainder reveals that the text, in this special sense, is already inhabited by its non-phenomenal other, its ghost, which both situates deconstruction within and against Hegelian speculative philosophy and characterizes the various readings found in this collection.

This double relation governs the essays in this volume. When Derrida called Hegel "the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing," he indicated that Hegel was both the culmination of Western metaphysics and the beginning of its deconstruction. Barnett says as much when he writes, "Hegel's text, in its performance of the thinking of difference, comprises the enabling condition of the strategies of deconstruction" (27). If we are to overcome Hegel (and modernity), then we must inhabit him—which we do, whether we know it or not. And to overcome him is to repeat him, with a difference. This contradictory structure is to be found already in Hegel: insofar as the truth of consciousness is self-consciousness, consciousness is already self-consciousness. Absolute self-relation is attained only when consciousness has returned from its other back to itself as self-consciousness. But this pathway is never smooth; it is marked by disruption, relativism, and plurality. Christianity, for instance, is the absolute religion but must be superseded by philosophy, Absolute Knowing; yet, as Simon Critchley comments, the *Aufhebung* of religion into philosophy is disrupted by what makes it possible, the holy family (205). In short, we are confronted with two ways of reading Hegel, which will amount to two ways of reading Derrida. Either Hegel's text needs

to be deconstructed or it is already deconstruction; either Derrida's reading of Hegel is an intervention that disrupts the system or it reveals a Hegel who is a thinker of difference as well as the philosopher of Absolute Knowledge. Our either/or is more properly a both/and: what unites these essays is a strategy of reading that asks, what remains in Hegel's text after the holocaust of Absolute Knowledge/after the text is deconstructed? What remains is the necessity of reading Hegel for these remains, that is, for what does not allow itself to be superseded or appropriated in the name of Absolute Knowledge. The Absolute is fissured, divided or fractured, like the columns in Derrida's most sustained reading of Hegel, *Glas*. In what remains, I will focus on the contributions to *Hegel After Derrida*.

The book is divided into three sections: "Hegel after Derrida" consists of readings of Hegel opened up by Derrida; "After Hegel after Derrida" considers the Hegelianism in Freud and Marx that Derrida's interpretation of Hegel opens up; "Reading *Glas*" offers commentary on Derrida's most extensive essay on Hegel. Barnett's introduction deftly sketches the twentieth-century responses to Hegel in Britain, the United States, and France and indicates the way, despite our efforts to overcome it, that "ours is still a Hegelian culture" (36).

Robert Bernasconi's "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti" is a well-documented study of Hegel's remarks on Africa in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* and *Lectures on the History of Religion*. Refusing to dismiss Hegel's comment that "Africa has no 'historical interest of its own'" as a culture-bound prejudice immaterial to his philosophy, Bernasconi demonstrates that Hegel distorted his sources, presenting Africans as barbaric and utterly lacking the sense of freedom necessary to be actors in world history (41). Hegel was not merely venting his prejudice (he read enough accounts of Africa that he could not plead ignorance); he required, writes Bernasconi, a null-point or basis to anchor his philosophy of world history (52). If this essay owes anything to Derrida, it is the insistence upon the centrality of a small, albeit notorious, passage in Hegel to the rest of his philosophy, but it stands alone in the volume in not locating some counterargument within Hegel that displaces his systematic philosophy.

In an analysis of *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, John H. Smith criticizes Derrida for conflating spirit and will. Had he given more attention to Hegel's writings on the will in the *Philosophy of Right*, writes Smith, Derrida would have found "a hermeneutic that accounts for both an objective disseminating and a subjective gathering of meaning" and a richer understanding of the "contradictory conditions of freedom" (65, 90). Will, understood as desire and lack, a wanting, offers a kind of politics that evades the metaphysics of spirit (*Geist*) because of its necessary arbitrariness. Here is a supposed correction of Derrida that owes its insights to him, but in insisting upon the role of

voluntaristic agency, Smith contains arbitrariness as the necessary ground of freedom, as what enables freedom rather than what limits it as well.

Jean-Luc Nancy's rich and rewarding essay, "The Surprise of the Event," exemplifies the quality of all his work. In what amounts to a double reading of Hegel, one that is both canonical and deconstructive, he proposes that Hegel set "philosophy the task of comprehending, *beyond* the truth, the taking place of truth," that is, "a truth beyond truth itself" (93). To think the truth as event/the event as truth is to think beyond metaphysics in order to think thought itself as the surprise (of the event as the coming-to-presence of what is). This step beyond metaphysics into the surprise of thought is to think the event in its irreducible singularity. It is to repeat the fundamental experience of philosophy, which begins in wonder.

Hegel's notorious declaration of the end of the art is subjected to an intricate reading by Werner Hamacher. "Art ends with irony, but in this ending art is also to complete itself and in this become art for the very first time" (105). In "Religion in the Form of Art," Hegel says art culminates in comedy, and Hamacher argues that it is only in comedy, where the subject realizes itself in the mask, that "self-consciousness shows itself as 'absolute essence'" (117). Rather than take on representational form, consciousness knows these externalized forms to be masks, something to be played with. Comedy is the spectacle of the disintegration of substance and the substantial subject. The end of art in comedy is the experience of art as the death of art, a death that preserves art as cenotaph. Ultimately, art, self-consciousness, Absolute Knowledge take hold of themselves in an end that never ends, an end that is the deconstitution of speculative ontology.

The consequences of this deconstitution can be seen in Stuart Barnett's thesis that speculative idealism is "a permanent Last Supper" (144). The Last Supper enacts the passage of the Absolute through the finite: in the consumption of the bread and wine, the material signs of God are destroyed in the very act of signification. "This is the mechanism of the *Aufhebung* in nuce" (31). The early theological essay "The Spirit of Christianity" makes clear "that speculative idealism is predicated upon the impossibility of its own founding premise." It attempts "to read the history of the Absolute on the basis of these signs of its disappearance" (144).

In asking why Hegel figures so prominently in *Glas* when Derrida's analysis of the family and phallogentrism points to psychoanalysis, Suzanne Gearhart proposes that the *Aufhebung* is equivalent to Freud's concept of repression, which cannot be understood in terms of what is repressed "but only in terms of repression itself" as an ongoing process that serves the system of idealization; it does not merely forget or suppress but "also creates signification and value" (159). The *Aufhebung* is the equivalent of repression insofar as it constitutes rational self-consciousness but is itself prerational, as is revealed in Derrida's analysis of the Hegelian family. Gearhart advises us to address the

question of sexuality or gender from the concept of repression or else we lapse into a pre-Freudian logic of fetishism (169).

Andrzej Warminski considers the relation between Hegel and Marx and finds Marx to be a better reader of Hegel than the Marxists. Beginning with the well-known statement from *The German Ideology*, "It's not consciousness that determines life . . . but rather life determines consciousness," Warminski demonstrates that Marx's reading is a deconstruction, "an operation of inversion and reinscription" (171, 173). The contradictions and negations of life cannot be sublated into a determinate negation because life is not a positive, given fact but is the product of human labor. In a reading of chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology*, "The Truth of Self-Certainty," Warminski traces how consciousness can become itself, self-consciousness, only by converting life into a "phenomenal figure for consciousness," which means that consciousness is as much a material production of history as life is (184, 191). Warminski concludes that Hegel's text is fissured, and it is this Hegel, the *other* Hegel, whom Marx reads and reinscribes so that he might become Marx (191). This transformational reading makes Marx a deconstructor.

The remaining essays are devoted to *Glas*. Simon Critchley seeks to win over a skeptical audience of philosophers to *Glas*'s importance as a work of Hegel scholarship. He covers not only Derrida's focus on religion and the transition from *Moralität* to *Sittlichkeit*, but also his method of reading, with its "fits and starts, jolts, little successive jerks . . . like a machine in the course of a difficult maneuver" (200). Derrida's treatment of the family, above all the brother-sister relationship and the figure of Antigone, points to a place in "the Hegelian system where an ethics is glimpsed that is irreducible to dialectics and cognition, which [he] would call an ethics of the singular," a recognition that ethics begins when the other is grasped not as "an object of cognition or comprehension, but precisely [as] that which exceeds my grasp and powers" (210–11). Critchley provides a very fine introduction to the reading of *Glas*.

Heinz Kimmerle examines Derrida's early essay on Bataille and Hegel, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve," and writes, "Derrida errs in his supposition that Bataille laughs at Hegel" (229). According to Bataille, in "sacrificial ritual the participants experience the death of the other . . . as their own death. . . . By knowing death, they distinguish themselves from animal life" (230). This sanguine reading of Hegel relies on the preservative moment of the *Aufhebung*, and Kimmerle praises Derrida for being truer to Hegel's texts by replacing this notion with that of displacement, which "opens up the system of reason to experiences that exceed its parameters" (230). For Hegel, knowledge is absolute self-relation, the return of knowledge out of the object back to itself. Derrida, however, asks what remains in the holocaust, the all-burning, of Absolute Knowledge? "The structure of self-cognition of knowledge lies outside of time," but this annulment

of time is not successful. The system cannot “be brought coherently to conclusion” (237–38). It is in terms of this failure, says Kimmerle, that we can speak of a “Hegelianism without reserve.”

For Kevin Thompson, the unsublatable is not a sign of Hegel’s failure; deconstruction is intrinsic to the dialectic. The brother and sister relation, unlike all other relations, is “excluded from the circular constitution of *Geist*,” but their intrinsic opposition “is necessary for the *Aufhebung* of the conflict between divine and human law and thus the circular closure of the sphere of *Sittlichkeit*” (257). The natural diversity of brother and sister is both necessary to and excluded from the self-relation of *Geist*, and as such reveals that diversity functions as a quasi-transcendental, permitting “the movement from abstract to determinate negation, the logic of *Aufhebung*” (257). The affinity between deconstruction and speculative thought raises the question whether *différance*, being intrinsically opposed to the dialectic, is constrained by it.

In the final essay, Henry Sussman ranges through both columns of *Glas* and throughout what he calls the “broader modernity,” which encompasses Western culture from the Enlightenment to the present. *Glas*, he argues, delimits the epoch of idealism in metaphysics, remarking its effects upon “Western societies and their colonies” (261). The dissonance between the two columns echoes the “splitting and suspension between multiple and often conflicting obligations” that characterize subjectivity in the broader modernity (262). Derrida is not pointing to some transcendence or escape from Western values. Deconstruction perdures “as sustained dissonance *within* the Western system and *between* its elements, rather than as a *definitive* dismantling or debunking” (265). This is not to say Derrida leaves us to our postmodern cynicism. If the Hegel column discloses the idealistic orientation of our language, the Genet column, in its contrapuntal play on Hegelian themes of family, religion, and love, restores the density of language on the smallest of levels, the sub-syllabic *gl*, to acknowledge the blindness and biases operating within Western culture. The “death knell or *glas*” tolls for the “ambivalent architecture” of a modernity that arises from a “sense of freedom and possibility” and “a dread at the very same open horizons of possibility” (292). What I have described as the both/and nature of the Hegelian text, its status as metaphysical and deconstructive, is for Sussman a conflict embodied in Hegel’s and, indeed, the Enlightenment’s sense of an affinity between subjectivity and language, the affinity that Hegel’s dialectic employs in its injection of history and desire into the discourse of consciousness. Derrida’s “text-oriented counterpoint” does not so much dismantle Enlightenment ideology as it remarks the material operations implicit to this discourse that still defines, at least in our efforts to escape it, our postmodernity.

Joseph G. Kronick
Louisiana State University



Enlarging America: The Cultural Work of Jewish Literary Scholars, 1930–1990 by Susanne Klingenstein. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998. Pp. xxxiv + 492. \$34.95 cloth.

As a middle-aged English professor who is Jewish and has occasionally written on questions of Jewishness and anti-Semitism, I approached Susanne Klingenstein's *Enlarging America* with enormous curiosity but also with a fair amount of baggage. Based on my experiences as a reader, a scholar, and a human being whose own, relatively banal, narrative bears striking affinities (absent fame and fortune) with those of many of my predecessors, I am struck not only by the partiality of Klingenstein's survey—in particular its failure to engage in any real way the contributions of Harold Bloom and Leslie Fiedler who, in my view, are the most important "Jewish literary scholars" of the last century—but also by the disproportion between the study's subjects (some of whom are still a good decade away from retirement) and the solemn, archly historical, narrative fashioned about them.

Virtually all of the Jewish literary scholars on whom Klingenstein focuses have had genuinely major careers and several of them, notably M. H. Abrams, Harry Levin, and Lionel Trilling, have exerted a powerful influence both as critical practitioners and, more importantly, as role models. Nor can one emphasize enough the strength and determination that the majority of Klingenstein's scholars have displayed in the face of prejudice and outright discrimination. At the same time, the relationship between Jews and the profession of English in this century has proceeded in remarkably short order from one of exclusion to an inclusion so pervasive that the hegemony that English currently enjoys in the humanities is virtually recapitulated by the omnipresence of Jews and/or people of Jewish origin in the discipline at large. Thus, my own department, which is typical of most university-level departments, not only features the first Jew to have actually received tenure there, but also a large number of Jewish scholars without whom the department would be nearly unrecognizable to the profession at large. The same is probably true of every major department of English in the United States.

The reasons for this sea-change are undoubtedly manifold. But it is symptomatic of Klingenstein's "historical" reconstruction of the emergence of Jewish scholars from circles and influences connected to Harvard and Columbia that this rather large and important fact gets quickly buried in her individual case studies, which (to reiterate the homology of my own narrative) are important less for their exemplary or unique status than for their structural similarities with the lives and careers of others, past and passing. This is not to suggest, again, that the critics and writers on whom Klingenstein focuses are not important in a way that merits the kind of attention that *Enlarging America*

necessarily bestows; it is simply to repeat that the context on which this study depends for justification—namely, the racial and cultural identity of its representative men and women—ultimately points in another direction entirely. And this, in turn, is nothing less than one of the most thoroughgoing instances of assimilation and reconsolidation in twentieth-century America. With the possible exception of Ruth Wisse, Robert Alter, and Norman Podhoretz, whose work focuses explicitly on texts and issues that are identifiably Jewish, the most striking feature of the other scholars considered here, beginning with Bernard Berenson, remains the drive to accumulate cultural capital that may or may not have already been underwritten by real capital. For although Klingenstein touches on it, what she does not emphasize sufficiently is the degree to which the exclusion of Jews both from English departments and from many areas of the academy in general had as much to do with the real prejudice of such scholars as Emery E. Neff, who urged his advisee and recently-appointed colleague Lionel Trilling not to try to “open the [Columbia] English department to more Jews” (256), as it had to do with the more mundane material conditions that made a livelihood in English studies extremely difficult for scholars with no other real source of income. Such institutional parsimony may also count as a discriminatory practice. But lost in the concentration of *Enlarging America's* too-focused viewpoint is the fact that for many non-Jews in the academy, the businesses of teaching and scholarship were viewed (however erroneously) as a disinterested service to scholarship and society rather than a site for the realization of ambition and, by extension, upward mobility.

Although a surprising number of Klingenstein's subjects grew up in rather privileged environments—specifically Harry Levin, Daniel Aaron, and Leo Marx (whose early instruction was actually administered by a French nanny)—the more important point to emphasize, even for those like M. H. Abrams who were merely comfortably middle class, is the peculiar and, I would even venture identitarian, ambition that stimulated their production of books and critical essays in contrast to the “pellets of knowledge” that “old-fashioned scholars . . . sent . . . to the *Philosophical Review* or the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*” (268). Thus, without necessarily endorsing Klingenstein's denigration of a certain kind scholarship practiced by gentiles and Jews alike, what she might have explored more broadly, over and against her informed but often disconnected surveys of these people's work, is the nature and disposition of the kinds of scholarship (or criticism, as the case may be) that many Jews produced at a time when one or two pellets were frequently a life's work, at least in matters of publication. The “so-called Age of Criticism” (268) had already dawned, of course, by the time that writers like Levin and Trilling began plying their trade. And, as Klingenstein shows, there was increasingly ample precedent, particularly in the work of F. O. Matthiessen, for the larger, more polemical, scholarship that critics like Levin, Abrams,

and Aaron would subsequently practice. Nevertheless, the determination of these Jewish scholars to be heard, and to be heard moreover in a register that was louder and larger and more pressing, particularly regarding questions of modernity, suffrage, and liberal society, seems far more central and compelling than the knowledge they may have actually produced. For while it was very much to these scholars' purpose to interrogate (or anatomize in some form) the constitution of a liberal society—a practice in which their initial status as outsiders was largely homologous to their now-inevitable role as critics and commentators—it is scarcely coincidental that these initiatives were routinely mounted on the back of canonical writing and in ostensible command of a legitimate and *legitimizing* cultural order on which criticism might therefore deliberate. Ambition, in other words, may have taken the form of critical understanding for someone like Trilling, but not before the object of that understanding—specifically the art from which both culture and society showed forth—revealed an ascendancy on the critic's part, and an implicit assimilation, from which criticism was not merely a departure but also a step beyond. In this way, a typically linear narrative of upward mobility and advancement was simultaneously a circular return to one's irreducible, if now privileged, difference as a reader of the things that mattered.

If I have departed in some measure from a more deliberate summary of *Enlarging America*, it is because the dialectic of ambition such as I have just described it, where being an insider and an outsider are necessarily intertwined, is the most important thing that I discovered, or was able to infer, as a result of having read this book. For those who want to know precisely what the study is about, suffice it to say that it examines the careers of a dozen or so scholars who were Jewish and variously associated with Harvard and Columbia Universities and/or with scholars and scholarship at those institutions. *Enlarging America* moves from extended and discrete discussions of the life and work of Harry Levin, M. H. Abrams, and Daniel Aaron, who had sustained associations with Harvard, to scholars such as Leo Marx, Alan Guttman, and Jules Chametzky, whose connection to Harvard was increasingly less concrete and more a matter of discipleship. Although Levin and Abrams spent most of their careers focusing on British and European literatures, albeit in reaction to the anti-libertarian bias of their Harvard predecessors, Irving Babbitt and T. S. Eliot, the remaining four were consumed with American studies and with the hopes and betrayals of democracy.

Similarly, in her treatment of the Columbia sphere which revolved more directly around the enigmatic and influential Lionel Trilling, Klingenstein traces Trilling's effect, discursively and ideologically, on a variety of literary practitioners, from academics such as Steven Marcus and Carolyn Heilbrun, to people of letters like Norman Podhoretz and Cynthia Ozick, whose status as public intellectuals was plainly an extension of the critical engagement exemplified in the work of their teacher. Finally, in perhaps the most arbitrary

section of her study, Klingenstein focuses on three scholars, Robert Alter, Ruth Wisse, and Sacvan Berkovitch, whose Jewishness is manifest either in a preoccupation with *Yiddishkeit* and Biblical narrative as acceptable locii of literary and critical inquiry or (in the case of Berkovitch) in a more analogous preoccupation with the religious and typological underpinnings of American culture.

Absent in this study, unfortunately, is any sustained consideration of either Leslie Fiedler or Harold Bloom. This is a real deficiency because these two highly influential critics were not merely mindful of their Jewishness in a myriad of ways and applications, but also capable of appreciating with an extraordinary degree of self-consciousness the meta-critical narratives (identitarian and otherwise) on which their criticism necessarily opens. The revised introduction to *The Visionary Company*, which makes explicit the cultural stakes for both “New Criticism” and its authoritarian canon versus Bloom’s version of criticism and *its* canon, is probably the single most revealing work of Jewish literary scholarship in the last fifty years. For here, as perhaps nowhere else, the critic’s religio-cultural identity is so thoroughly assimilated to the task of reading Romanticism (and reading against T. S. Eliot and his followers) that it reemerges, somewhat like Freud’s uncanny, in an otherwise alien body of writing which is suddenly indivisible from—or unreadable without—the Jewishness of its retrospective admirer. This sort of enlargement, however tendentious and self-serving, is precisely what *Enlarging America* would have done well to examine more.

William Galperin

Rutgers University, New Brunswick



Philo-Semitism in Nineteenth-Century German Literature by Irving Massey. *Condicio Judaica* 29. Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000. Pp. 199. 98,00 DM paper.

Irving Massey’s study aims to offer analyses of a “number of nineteenth-century works of literature, mainly in German, by Gentile authors, in which Jews and/or Judaism are presented in a favorable, or at least not unfavorable light” (9). The topic presents a dual challenge because the corpus of philo-Semitic literature is rather slim, and, moreover, the literary quality of these texts is often lacking. Statements such as “it is hard to extract much of interest from such mediocre fiction” (127, in reference to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s *Der Kreisphysikus*) abound in the book. At times the author declares himself to be surprised to find any philo-Semitism at all in nineteenth-century German literature; more often than not, even comparatively positive descriptions of

Jews do not fully meet his definition of philo-Semitism as “writing about Jewish characters in a relaxed and natural way” (12, footnote 16). Throughout the study one senses an unresolved conflict between the author and his material which he finds, perhaps rightly so, sorely deficient in quantity as well as quality. For the reader, however, this raises the question why Massey chose to formulate his topic the way he did. His passionate search for positive Jewish characters in an anti-Semitic culture confirms yet once more than nineteenth-century Germany was indeed largely hostile to Jews.

Massey’s book, it turns out, is as much about anti-Semitism as it is about philo-Semitism and at times it seems that the former is really the topic, spanning the range from nineteenth-century anti-Semitism to the Third Reich to neo-Nazism. The first section of the introduction, for instance, ends with a brief yet scathing indictment of the philosopher Carl Schmitt’s hatred of Jewish converts to Christianity. While Massey’s critique is more than justified, it is not clear how Schmitt’s diatribes tie in with the declared goal of the study. Nineteenth-century anti-Semitism—and the corresponding lack of consequential philo-Semitism—is a precursor to Nazism, and anti-Semitism in contemporary Germany and Poland must be seen in relation to the *shoah*. Given the study’s focus on a specific phenomenon in literature, however, a more detailed discussion of philo-Semitism in its nineteenth-century variant might have been helpful to place the authors in question in their respective cultural contexts. The contemporary reader cannot but relate Fontane’s anti-Semitic wish of a “schwere Heimsuchung” (serious misfortune) on the Jews to twentieth-century history but the analysis of texts by nineteenth-century non-Jewish writers who offered their largely gentile audience sympathetic portrayals of Jewish characters could have been enriched by a discussion of the scope and meaning of philo-Semitism during this time period.

Philo-Semitism in Nineteenth-Century German Literature impresses through the number of sources it presents despite the relative scarcity of texts professing a positive attitude toward Jews. After a substantial chapter on a story by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Massey discusses works by other nineteenth-century authors, including well-known writers such as Wilhelm Hauff, Wilhelm Raabe, Karl Gutzkow, and Bettina von Arnim, but also lesser known ones such as the Austrian Ada Christen. In the chapter on Sacher-Masoch, Massey is able to show that the writer plagiarized large sections of his story “Pintschew and Mintschew” from the early nineteenth-century scholar Peter Beer, suggesting that Sacher-Masoch was less of an expert on things Jewish than commonly assumed and, more gravely, less of a philo-Semite than Sacher-Masoch himself wanted his audience to believe as he seems to urge his Jewish characters toward religious conversion. Massey concedes, however, that Sacher-Masoch managed to “provide a beautiful interpretation” of the plagiarized material (45). A separate chapter is dedicated to the Alsace-Lorrainean writer team

Émile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian, who published numerous stories with Jewish themes and figures. Their long-term collaboration ceased over the Franco-German conflict over Alsace-Lorraine, with Erckmann, who adopted a pro-German position also being the more philo-Semitic of the two. A discussion of their works is included in the study because Alsace-Lorraine's status as a cultural and geographic border region mirrors the position of Jews as middlemen between cultures.

Methodologically, Massey combines literary and personal statements by the authors in question and then assesses the writer's position toward Jews. Since literary creation and personal remarks often do not concur with one another Massey finds it impossible to arrive at unambiguous conclusions. His treatment of Theodor Fontane might serve as an example here. The discussion begins with a reference to Fontane's often quoted poem concerning the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, the one in which Fontane regrets the absence of the Prussian aristocracy and somewhat grudgingly welcomes his Jewish admirers. "Any Jew" familiar with Fontane's poem wants to say "I don't need him, and I don't want him" (108), Massey states emphatically. He then offers a sympathizing reading of Fontane's Jewish figures in *L'Adultera*, attesting "broad-minded tolerance" (113) in the author if it were not for his hostile statements elsewhere. One can only speculate how Fontane himself might have responded to someone pointing out these inconsistencies, but such conjectures could shed some light on nineteenth-century German culture and its contradictory treatment of Jews. A more detailed discussion of the phenomenon of philo-Semitism in nineteenth-century Europe could have helped to understand how the comparatively few nineteenth-century writers who chose to create positive Jewish characters at all reconciled pro- and anti-Jewish positions. In the concluding chapter Massey offers an explanation for the incongruities inherent in philo-Semitic literature. Gentile guilt, he argues, is at the core of the contradictory treatment of Jews. In his innovative reading of Droste-Hülshoff's *Judenbuche* Massey suggests that the murder of the Jew comes back to haunt the perpetrator because it is so "easy" to commit. As a result, gentile writers find Jewish characters more useful in their absence rather than their presence, as is the case with Fontane's figure of the duped Jewish husband Van der Straaten. The absent Jew, then, becomes the embodiment of gentile guilt. Massey's book ends with a quote from Theodor Fontane. In giving the "Philosemitic Antisemite" (Wolfgang Paulsen's phrase) the last word, Massey suggests that Fontane's writings reflect nineteenth-century Germany's attitude toward Jews not despite but because of their contradictions.

Katharina Gerstenberger
University of Cincinnati



Satire and Romanticism by Steven E. Jones. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Pp. x + 262. \$49.95 cloth.

Steven Jones's *Satire and Romanticism* is "a study of the constructive and ultimately canon-forming relationship between satiric and Romantic modes of writing" during the Romantic period (1). Announcing his intention to delineate the crucial pressure satire exerted on the literary mode that has come to be identified as "Romantic" and on the process of selection and evaluation that eventually gave Romanticism its central position in literary history, Jones argues that Romanticism is "countersatiric" through and through. The generic absence of satire from the Romantic canon and the denigration of satire by its theorists are determinate, not merely accidental, features of its self-understanding. It is to a significant degree by the negation of the "socially encoded, public, profane, and tendentious rhetoric" of satire that Romantic poetry takes its familiar shape, "vatic or prophetic, inward-turning, sentimental, idealizing, sublime, and reaching for transcendence" (3).

The vigorous and pervasive presence of satire in the Romantic period, once obscured by several generations of comparative neglect, has been firmly reestablished in the last twenty years by the work of Ian McCalman and a number of others, including Steven Jones in *Shelley's Satire* (1994). Recognizing that satire could not have exerted significant pressure on the eventually dominant Romantic mode unless it were also widely practiced and highly esteemed during the period, Jones draws upon this fund of scholarship frequently in his current book. *Satire and Romanticism* moves beyond the project of reclaiming the period's satire from neglect, however, in order to tackle the necessary question of assessing the relationship between the extensive satiric archive and the long-familiar Romantic canon. Given the depth and complexity of the satiric archive, the alternatives of inclusion or exclusion from the canon can no longer be acceptably understood as the straightforward results of aesthetic quality or as the proven durability of universal themes over merely local and ephemeral ones. Thus the object of this study is ultimately neither the meaning and value of the texts themselves nor even the generic qualities of the satiric and Romantic modes, but rather the dynamics of the "literary field" within which the practice, theory, history, and canon of Romanticism were produced. Jones understands "the making of the 'Romantic' in relation to the 'satiric'" (1) as a series of negotiations that takes place in what Pierre Bourdieu calls the market of symbolic goods, and Bourdieu's theoretical work on the production and exchange of symbolic capital guides Jones's analysis throughout.

Working from these scholarly and theoretical bases, Jones has produced a wide-ranging, unfailingly intelligent, and admirably clear essay that indeed helps to resituate the embattled term "Romanticism" within our contemporary

critical terrain. Five of the six Major Figures are treated at length: Wordsworth and Coleridge each form the focus of a chapter, Byron takes up two, and Shelley and Keats get major attention in two more. The most unambiguously posed of these figures turns out to be Wordsworth, whom Jones presents as the anti-satirical theorist and practitioner *par excellence*. Coleridge and Keats are far more ambivalent. Jones argues that parodies of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* emerge from the heart of the enterprise itself, and that Coleridge himself is in a strong sense the primary parodist. Keats's "The Jealousies" similarly sits uneasily on the fence between satire and sincerity. The inclusion of Shelley and Byron in this study is of course no surprise, yet the attention they receive is far from routine. All of these readings proceed not only from the presence or absence of satiric impulses within the Romantic poets' writing, but also by way of dialogue with some of the major contemporary practitioners of satire, like Gifford, Wooler, and Crabbe. Beyond that, Jones extends the interaction—primarily the struggle for prestige—between the romantic and the satiric farther into the marketplace of symbolic goods by looking at the culture of the reviewers and the literary salons, the pressure of political controversy, the way the technology of representation insinuates itself into practice and theory, and the way popular or carnivalesque modes, especially the pantomime, influence literary practice.

The chapter on Wordsworth typifies Jones's de-idealizing and historicizing approach. One of the most striking moments in the chapter is the persuasive suggestion that Wordsworth's famous comments in the *Essay on Epitaphs* on the dangers of language becoming a "counter-spirit" are, in context, not a metaphysical or metalinguistic meditation but rather a quite concrete attack on the tradition of Pope: a "deliberate and serious satire upon satire" (23). Jones emphasizes the degree to which George Crabbe was a serious competitor for reputation with Wordsworth at the time the passage was written, and contends that Crabbe stood behind Pope as an unnamed but crucial target of criticism throughout the Pope controversy. A critical juxtaposition of Peter Bell and Peter Grimes brings the point home to Wordsworth's poetic practice, as Jones argues that the Wordsworthian pastoral is recognizably Romantic to us precisely in its "desire to produce countersatire," that is, to studiously avoid the satire the figure of Peter Bell would have led an audience to expect and offer instead "an apotheosis of the sympathetic imagination" (33).

Jones maintains, *contra* Wordsworth, that "the comparison of Crabbe and Wordsworth refuses to yield absolute or clear-cut binary oppositions" (39). The following two chapters explore this claim more fully from different directions. First, Jones examines a number of parodies of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in order to support his claim that "the possibility of parody . . . is anticipated and subsumed in the structure of Coleridge's dialogic text of 1817"

(53). But the point is that this possibility itself simply realizes the tension already present in the earliest version between the Gothic ballad tradition and the literary mode that tries to raise it into something of a higher kind. The parodies of the *Rime* thus draw attention to the symbolic violence by which Romanticism fashions itself out of “romantic” elements of popular literature. Jones follows this with an account of Thomas J. Wooler’s *The Black Dwarf* that concentrates on the way “the conflict of modes and the conflicted situation of the editor . . . inscribe in the text of the journal the heterogeneity of its expected reception” (79). Jones describes at some length the dialectical interaction of satire and sentimentality in Wooler’s writing and its basis in class positions and political struggles. The description is brought to bear upon the overarching thesis by moving to Keats (briefly) and Shelley (at more length) to show that on occasion their “strategic destabilizing mix of satire and sentiment” (107) is very like Wooler’s. There is “nothing inherently Romantic about Shelley’s satire—or un-Romantic about Wooler’s” (107).

The next two chapters turn more explicitly to the politics of literary reputation. In the first, a canny reading of Shelley’s “Adonais” serves as the centerpiece for an argument that stretches from Gifford’s attack on the Della Cruscan in *The Baviad* to Leigh Hunt’s 1823 satire on Gifford, *Ultra-Crepidarius*. The attacks on the Della Cruscan in the politico-cultural wars of the 1790s establish a basic structure of conflict between “sensitive, otherworldly poets at one pole and worldly, violent satirists at the other” (123) that survives in Shelley’s elegy as well as the negative reviews of *Endymion* and “Adonais.” Shelley manages to transform this structure into a vehicle of martyrdom and apotheosis, and when Hunt follows suit in the *Ultra-Crepidarius*, he begins to produce Romanticism as a school of victimized but ultimately triumphant poets—a move that eventually obscures not only the Romantics’ Della Cruscan predecessors but their satirical enemies as well.

Jones takes up the opposition between aggressively masculinist reviewers and feminized literary coteries in the next chapter by way of charting Byron’s ambivalent relations with both the reviewers and the Bluestockings. Jones reads Byron’s portraits of himself and Thomas Moore as exemplary professional men of letters in his satiric skit, “The Blues,” as a defensive reaction constructing a “homosocial mirror” (152) of the feminized realm of tastemaking centered in the literary salons. Byron’s satirical attacks on the Blues stem from his real anxiety about being attacked by them, and this, Jones argues, is true of the review culture in general. Yet beneath this (partly fantastic) struggle between alternate coteries lie the emergent commercial forces and the nascent mass audience that were mostly decisively shaping the literary profession.

The penultimate chapter, on *Don Juan*, romantic irony, and the pantomime, gives us Jones at his de-idealizing and historicizing best. His purpose is to take the narrator’s apparently offhand comment that “We have all seen [Don

Juan] in the pantomime” for all it is worth—and, Jones insists, it is worth considerably more than previous commentary has realized. Not only does the pantomime, with its central transformative moment that moves “from serious to burlesque, folktale to farce, romance to satire” (176) provide an important formal model for Shelley’s practice and Hunt’s theory of satire, it also turns out to be central to the notion of “performative buffoonery” (186) that characterizes Friedrich Schlegel’s notion of Romantic irony and the ideal modern artist. In fact, Jones argues, Byron’s irony has far more to do with the popular pantomime than with German metaphysics. The poem’s anti-philosophical, skeptical, and self-reflexive qualities are all “pantomimic. . . . This amounts to the same thing as saying it exemplifies Romantic irony: but in a way that is actually closer to Schlegel’s *commedia*-inspired theory than most twentieth-century criticism has yet realized” (192).

The final chapter forms a coda on the previous arguments by mediating on the disappearance of Ebenezer Elliott from the canon. By the 1830s, Elliott’s political satire had become antithetical to the dominant literary culture to the extent that Carlyle’s efforts to praise Elliott must depoliticize him, make him “classless and sincere” (216), make him, in short, “anything but what he was: a satirist” (217). This is the literary culture within which the Romantics assume their dominant position in literary history. The success of Jones’s remarkably readable and lucid book is to suggest persuasively that purging satire from the scene of Romantic writing was a crucial, constitutive element of Romantic canonization, and to gauge the degree to which this repressed genre had already shaped the triumphant mode.

John Rieder
University of Hawai‘i, Manoa



The Cast of Characters: A Reading of Ulysses by Paul Schwaber. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999. Pp. xix + 236. \$27.50 cloth.

As he prepares to explore Molly Bloom’s daytime behavior and her nighttime thoughts, thereby laying a foundation for speculations about the sources of her anxiety, Paul Schwaber says he intends to focus on Molly’s “living image” rather than her meaning within a theoretical framework. He will do this, he says, “by staying close to the text and remaining hospitable to other perspectives” (207). This simple formula neatly summarizes Schwaber’s strategy in his eminently readable and humane study of *Ulysses*. Basing his analysis not only on his dual roles as psychoanalyst and literary critic but also on years

of watching his students' responses to Joyce's novel, Schwaber patiently retraces the book's details and considers their implications. Again and again he takes a new look at how the characters think and behave. The result is a fresh and engaging study.

Schwaber examines the minds of individual characters—especially Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom but also several minor characters (Father Conmee, Tom Kernan, Dilly Dedalus, C.P. M'Coy, Gerty MacDowell)—and the means by which Joyce brings their psyches to light. Ultimately, he will explore the sources of Stephen's depression, Bloom's anger, Molly's anxiety, but he is in no hurry to do so: the details of *Ulysses* fascinate him, and he lingers over them, asking a pertinent question here and there before taking up another scene or another side of a character. It is the characters' many-sidedness, their irreducibility to a formula, that he believes accounts for readers' continuing delight in Joyce's narrative. Schwaber's title uses the phrase "cast of characters" in several ways, three of which he outlines in the introduction: the novel's "array of characters" or *dramatis personae*; the "tenacious presence" of the characters that comes to resemble "the cast of a lengthening shadow"; and the individual "cast" of one's character—a "cast of psychological character [that] confirms both inner durability and uniqueness" (xiii–xix).

As a preliminary example of his method, Schwaber looks at a series of minor characters in the Wandering Rocks chapter, choosing those who have an intriguing relationship to one or more of the book's three major characters and who are richly conceived. Of course *Ulysses* includes many examples of what Forster called "flat" characters, but the number of "round" characters is surprisingly large, a fact that Schwaber reads as a sign of the novel's "democratic" nature: in Wandering Rocks, he notes, "the panoramic view and democratic array of characters convey the impression that a good number of Dublin's citizens could reward extended consideration" (24). One after another, minor characters turn out to be complex, interesting, and minutely portrayed, often in ways that complicate our readings of Stephen or Bloom. M'Coy and Kernan, for example, have different (but no less perceptible) affinities to Bloom, while of all the members of his family it is Dilly who most resembles Stephen Dedalus in her desire to fly past the nets of poverty and hopelessness. Yet while he feels sorry for her, Stephen does not offer to share with his sister the wages that he collected that morning from Deasy, although he has already wasted a good share of it on drinks for newspapermen; it is their improvident father, Simon, who gives Dilly a shilling for the family and two pennies to buy food for herself.

Despite his obvious sympathy for Dilly, Stephen feels compelled to keep her at arm's length, fearing that she will "drown" him. Schwaber connects that fear to Stephen's Shakespeare theory, arguing that the theory's emphasis on

betrayal by a brother is a symptom of Stephen's insistence on keeping his own siblings (and brother surrogates) at arm's length, an insistence stemming from the fact that as the oldest child in the family he was repeatedly displaced in his mother's affections through the birth of a new brother or sister. He is now possessed by depression, mourning a mother who died over a year earlier, because "unconsciously he is raging at her for deserting him—for having banished him again and finally" by dying (64). Intellectually Stephen is quite independent of his mother; emotionally he is not. His theory (like his thoughts generally) indicates that he has never developed a mature relationship with a woman and constantly fears betrayal. Feeling exiled from his mother, Stephen turns "for self-acknowledgement and self-worth" to male writers, especially Shakespeare (67). And as Schwaber notes, Stephen's theory is itself an example of what, according to the theory, Shakespeare did in his plays: both Shakespeare and Stephen have "fathered verbally crafted dramatis personae who were transformations" of themselves (66). Shakespeare becomes what Stephen wants, needs, him to be.

Following his discussion of the psychology of the Shakespeare theory, Schwaber devotes two chapters to Leopold Bloom, the first on his Jewishness and the second on the forms and sources of his anger, before turning to "the odd couple"—the meeting, conversation, and parting of Stephen and Bloom—and concluding with a chapter on Molly Bloom's anxiety. There is not room here to summarize each chapter, but it is worth noting that Schwaber looks closely and intelligently at the sources of psychic wounds that continue to afflict the characters. Some of these, like Stephen's, are traceable to the loss of a mother, although Bloom and Molly lost their mothers long ago (in the latter case, so long ago that Molly cannot recall hers). This first loss has left a wound that is reopened by other losses that are recalled more often in the book: Bloom's father's suicide and the death in infancy of Rudy Bloom. The death of their son led both Leopold and Molly Bloom to fear another such loss so much that it seriously affected their sexual relationship. Schwaber's analysis is based on strong textual evidence, and although the material is familiar, there are any number of strikingly new points along the way. For example, both Molly Bloom and the shape of her monologue have been debated for decades now, yet I do not recall anyone having made the case for a clear and consistent pattern in the location of its paragraph breaks. Yet as Schwaber notes, "the paragraph endings prove revealing" (209), and what they tend to reveal is a moment of crisis in Molly's sense of her life. The endings move from elation to desperation, marking points of rupture in Molly's "psychic fluidity that approaches boundarylessness, transgression, and diffusion, that sweeps forward to renewed genitivity and back to the earliest stages of development" (211).

What stands out in this study, however, is not the goal but the journey: not the revelation of a source for anxiety, as interesting as that might be, but

the many fine observations made along the way. Indeed, the book is so well written, its evidence handled so judiciously, that I am reluctant to linger over what I regard as its relatively minor deficiencies. For the sake of balance, however, I should note that *Old Times in the Barony*, a brief book by John S. Conmee, S.J., is not “focused on the aristocracy,” as Schwaber believes (27); I have a facsimile reprint of the book, and a glance through its pages confirms my recollection that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the aristocracy. It should also be noted that it is Jacky rather than Tommy Caffrey who supposedly runs into Bloom in the Circe chapter (see Schwaber, 109, and *Ulysses*, Gabler edition, 15.237–38: “Jacky Caffrey, hunted by Tommy Caffrey, runs full tilt against Bloom”). I am also skeptical about the references to Bloom’s “inability . . . to have complete intercourse with his wife” and to their “nongenital [sexual] interaction” (112, 218): Bloom seems *unwilling* rather than *unable* to have what the book calls “complete carnal intercourse, with ejaculation of semen within the natural female organ” (*Ulysses* 17.2278–79) with his wife, and there is no reason to assume their sexual relations are totally nongenital, only that they conclude that way. My suspicion is that Bloom has been practicing premature withdrawal.

Earlier I referred to the scene in which one of the Caffrey twins *supposedly* runs into Bloom, and that note of skepticism also distinguishes my reading from Schwaber’s: he has no doubts that the boys are present in Nighttown, whereas I’m not so sure. A more important difference between our approaches is evident throughout his reading of the Circe episode, for Schwaber seems to assume that all of the events dramatized in the chapter are either real life occurrences or conscious fantasies in the mind of Stephen or of Bloom. This seems to me an untenable reading, in part because, as Schwaber admits, “neither Bloom nor Stephen appears to remember the dramatic interiorities he experienced in Nighttown.” Rather than regarding this failure of memory as a sign that the fantasies “have been repressed,” as Schwaber believes (167), I would argue that it is a sign that the fantasies were those of the narrator rather than the characters. Looking at them in that way helps to explain how the characters can have knowledge of things they could not literally know, and it links the chapter’s technique with the parts of the Cyclops chapter that abandon realistic narration in favor of a burlesque narration that is not tied to the conscious (or unconscious) mind of any individual character.

Then again, these differences between our approaches are reassuring: they demonstrate anew how rich a book *Ulysses* is, how many ways it may be read and reread. Both for its insights and for its reader-friendly style, Schwaber’s book is one of the best on *Ulysses* in recent years. In his last sentence, Schwaber refers to *Ulysses* as “a good read” (223). The same might be said of *The Cast of Characters*, a study that will delight and instruct.

Patrick A. McCarthy
University of Miami