
Volume 35

Issue 2 *Fin de Siecle Perspectives on Twentieth-Century
Literature and Culture*

Article 7

1993

Book Reviews

Criticism Editors

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

Recommended Citation

Editors, Criticism (1993) "Book Reviews," *Criticism*: Vol. 35: Iss. 2, Article 7.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism/vol35/iss2/7>

Waking Giants: Modernism and the Presence of the Past, by Herbert N. Schneidau. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. 279. \$34.50.

Do you want to waste your best energies in this eternal and useless admiration of the past, from which you issue fatally exhausted, diminished, and downtrodden? . . . but we don't want to hear anything more about it, the past—we strong and youthful futurists!

F. T. Marinetti, "First Manifesto of Futurism" (1909)

J'aime une oeuvre ancienne pour sa nouveauté. Il n'y a que le contraste qui nous relie au passé.

Tristan Tzara, "Manifeste Dada 1918"

"Make it new," intoned Ezra Pound, issuing what is perhaps the best remembered imperative of the historical avant-garde. "Une grande époque vient de commencer," declared the authors of the 1920 manifesto—they were Le Corbusier, the painter Amédée Ozenfant, and the poet Paul Dermé—that introduced the first number of *L'Esprit Nouveau*. "New" and "nouveau": such words evoke our typical impression of the break constituted by cultural modernism, the sense that modernism marked an unprecedented departure from the past which permanently altered the vocabulary of the arts in Euro-American culture. Yet it has hardly gone unremarked that modernism was also deeply responsive to the past's allure. When Pound tried to find a figure for his effort to create a modern epic in *The Cantos*, he chose Odysseus as portrayed in the *Nekuia* from Book 11 of *The Odyssey*, the descent to the underworld, choosing this episode because it was patently "older than the rest" of Homer's work: it was the oldest part of the oldest work in Western literature. And when Le Corbusier gathered essays from *L'Esprit Nouveau* to lay out a systematic program of modern design, *Vers une architecture* (1923), he closed the book with a section of photographs depicting the Acropolis of Periclean Athens, an image whose power was only augmented by appearing after a series of sleek ships, shiny automobiles, and powerful aircraft: the new beauty created by the machine age, such a sequence said, would lead us not forward, but backward to the foundational monument of Western architecture.

Though Herbert N. Schneidau's new book, *Waking Giants: The Presence of the Past in Modernism*, invokes this essential paradox of modernism in its title, the subject itself receives rather limited treatment. "I do not propose to offer a 'theory' of Modernism," the author warns on the first page (vii), while on the third he disavows interest in arguing that "this idea [about the past] 'unified' Modernism" (ix). In keeping with this reluctance, Schneidau offers only desultory comments about why the past played such a crucial role in a movement otherwise so enamoured of the new. At one point, defending modernism against the charge of elitism, he urges that the modernists were deeply driven by "an animus against snobbism," an animus that "gave powerful impetus to the belief that the present had to be atavistically invigorated by a live, earthy past" (viii). At another point he calls attention to the waning of the late Victorian faith in progress and evolution. As a result, he says, the past was freed of its negative connotations; it no longer represented the threat of dangerous regression, no longer suggested the possibility that civili-

zation might relapse into barbarism: "in the imaginations of the Modernists, unafflicted by melioristic fantasies of progress, atavism was rehabilitated, and became the matrix of a new energy in art" (16). At a third point Schneidau offers another explanation, tentatively again: "The enabling act of Modernism may well have been the treatment of the 'chthonic' religion of Greece by the Cambridge anthropologists, especially Jane Harrison" (23). But after a summary of Harrison's views that lasts for scarcely a sentence, this notion, too, is abandoned. Nor does Schneidau attempt to correlate these accounts or place them within some more ambitious or coherent argument. He has, plainly, little interest in exploring the intellectual background to the modernist view of the past, notwithstanding the suggestions raised by his title. His attention is elsewhere, concentrated on what he terms "atavism," or "the theme of the reappearance or resuscitation of the past" (x), a rubric that is vague enough to lend a semblance of unity to what is basically a collection of five essays, mostly close readings in a New Critical vein, that treat "The Darkling Thrush" by Hardy, *Howards End* by E. M. Forster, *The Secret Agent* by Conrad, several works by Sherwood Anderson, and the poetics of Ezra Pound.

Schneidau does advance some broader claims about the importance of his collection. Studying the theme of atavism "illuminates some vital but obscure relationships" in literary history, clarifying, for example, connections among E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Second, it suggests new readings of such classics as *Howards End* and *The Secret Agent*. Third, it offers an approach to "the discomfort" that the modernists felt "with the very idea of the 'modern.'" And fourth, it raises important questions about the role of the past in human nature (ix-x). The more ambitious of these topics, however, receive very little attention. The modernists' disaffection with modernity is treated only sporadically in the course of the book, while the role of the past in human nature is dispatched in three pages (13-15) that teem with generalities: "Humans are the only animals who, by using language, can pass on images from the past to newer generations," and so on (13-14). Schneidau assumes that language is fundamentally retrospective and hence always about the past—theories of language which emphasize the performative, perlocutionary, and future-oriented aspects of language, go unmentioned—and indeed, he pursues this assumption to its utmost consequence. For if language is truly retrospective in character, and if it can also be said to structure consciousness and hence our perception of reality, then even our experience of the present collapses into the past:

Consciousness seems to turn stimuli and perceptions into a running, subverbal but latently articulate narrative, a "story" of our lives that gives us a chance to think things over . . . consciousness is simply instant memory . . .

Perhaps. But in enlarging the past until it engulfs consciousness and the present, Schneidau succeeds only in emptying it of significance. The past becomes everything, but it also becomes nothing. It is difficult, in fact, to understand why the author troubles to include these speculations, which seem disconnected from the rest of the book, and which often merely restate arguments made long ago by Julian Jaynes in *The Origins of Consciousness* (1976).

If Schneidau's book consisted solely of such remarks, it would be of little value. But its merits are very real, and they reside not in generalities about language and consciousness, but in the minute attention that he brings to particular texts, in the detailed observations of a critic who turns out to be a gifted and responsive reader of the works that have caught his interest.

Because the best parts of this book are so closely tied to textual specifics, it resists easy summarization. It may prove more useful, instead, to consider a single essay that epitomizes some of its central concerns, such as the extended close reading of *Howards End*. Here Schneidau seeks to trace the many ways that Forster uses "the motifs of the house and the land around it" to dramatize "an ideology that we can call that of the sacred space, or autochthony, that is, the belief that spiritual powers . . . inhere . . . in the earth; that they are beings, incarnate in landforms or dwellings or tombs; and they forcefully affect even godless lives" (65). This is the most successful chapter in the book, in no small measure because of its affectionate attention to the novel's verbal texture and symbolic details. Schneidau, for example, swiftly focuses on Helen Schlegel's letter at the novel's beginning, in which she describes the house called *Howards End* and its inhabitants, the Wilcox family. Nearly all the features discussed by Helen reappear in subsequent chapters, and Schneidau shows how they pattern the novel's form and lay out the mythological motifs associated with autochthony. Thus Mrs. Ruth Wilcox, "with her hands full of the hay that was cut yesterday," becomes a "theophany of Demeter," the hay "her cereal icon." Upon her death she also becomes Persephone, who "disappears to emerge in renewed forms of life," rendering her demise "fructifying, sacrificial" (70). Her instinctive wisdom, Schneidau summarizes, "comes from atavism" (71). Later in the novel, when Margaret Schlegel, now the second Mrs. Wilcox, visits *Howards End* for the first time after Ruth's death, it is no accident that the old housekeeper mistakes her for Ruth—for she is "clutching a bunch of weeds" recalling the earlier hay (Schneidau, p. 74). Similarly, when Margaret attends Ruth Wilcox's funeral, she stands "far back among the women" of the village rather than with the Wilcox family, a gesture Schneidau terms "instinctively correct" (76) insofar as it aligns her with the country people and their supposedly more natural, more intuitive understanding of death. The essay abounds with shrewd observations of this sort, as when Schneidau underscores the dramatic irony in Henry Wilcox's hurried remark, "another time" (73), or when he discusses the erotic undercurrents in the relationship between the Schlegel sisters, particularly in the single night they spend together in *Howards End* (85–86), or when he traces the novel's pattern of rest versus movement, and how these are gendered (79–83).

Yet the chapter is not without problems, some of which appear when Schneidau turns from *Howards End* to consider its interrelations with texts by other writers. Eliot comes first. Schneidau devotes three pages (89–91) to showing that Forster's description of London "inhaling . . . exhaling her exhausted air," may have influenced Eliot's depiction of the crowd that "flowed over London Bridge" in *The Waste Land*. But it is never really made clear why this should concern us, if true, or how it alters our understanding of Eliot's masterpiece, or how it contributes to Schneidau's arguments about autochthony and atavism. Then comes a longer treatment of F. Scott Fitzgerald's

Gatsby (91-97), assessing *Gatsby* as "an Americanized Leonard Bast" (94), his garish mansion as an analogue of *Howards End*, and the role of automobiles in both books. Finally, Schneidau proceeds to compare *Howards End* with Forster's other major novel, *A Passage to India* (97-101). The later work reveals a "harsher vision" (98), displays "fewer metaphors for the animate earth" (99), and has, alas, "no houses of importance" (99). Though this discussion contains many insights, especially in its treatment of Fitzgerald, the remarks trickle like drops of water from a leaky faucet, united only by their remorseless succession. They are not steps in a coherent argument about the themes of autochthony or atavism in modernism, but disjointed comments.

A different problem becomes apparent when Schneidau attempts to situate Forster's treatment of myth within twentieth-century cultural history. After noting Forster's friendships with Hardy and D. H. Lawrence, Schneidau comments: "For Forster it was thus "in the air." His . . . education in classics also enticed him with its promise of recovering a lost world and turning it into a merely displaced one. He may even have heard something of Jane Harrison and the other Cambridge anthropologists, though he never manifested firsthand knowledge. In a sense his work uncannily recapitulates Harrison's discovery . . . of chthonic, local traditions, cults, and numens of place" (68). This, together with the reference to Harrison mentioned earlier, is all that Schneidau has to say about this question, even though he subtitles this chapter, "Forster as Cambridge Anthropologist." It is a threadbare approach to cultural history, and even Schneidau senses that quotation marks are needed to contain its airiness. His claim about Harrison seems not the outcome of a persuasive argument, but empty assertion.

Yet somewhat more than Schneidau suggests is known about the web of relationships connecting Forster and Jane Harrison. When Forster went up to King's College, Cambridge, in 1897, he came armed with letters of introduction to the Cambridge botanist Frank Darwin, at whose tea parties he appeared often during subsequent years. Darwin was married to Ellen Crofts, who was Jane Harrison's best friend from her student days at Newham, and during the period from 1898, when Harrison herself moved to Cambridge, to Ellen's death in 1903, "Aunt Jane" was virtually a member of the Darwin family. She would "lunch with my parents almost every Sunday in term," as their daughter Frances later recalled (Frances Darwin, quoted in Jessie Stewart, *Jane Ellen Harrison: A Portrait in Letters* [London: Merlin Press, 1959], 105); and it seems only too likely that the Darwins, knowing of Forster's interest in classics and archaeology, would have mentioned Harrison's work to him, or even have introduced him to her. And if the Darwins did not do so, surely the Stracheys did: for Forster, as is well known, met Lytton Strachey shortly after his arrival in Cambridge and frequented his company during the period 1898-1904; Lytton's sister Pernel, in turn, was one of Harrison's colleagues at Newham, and their rapport was warm enough that they could travel together to Sweden, with Lytton in tow, for six weeks in 1910. All these relations have been chronicled by P. N. Furbank in *E. M. Forster: A Life* (50, 52, and 54) and Sandra Peacock in *Jane Ellen Harrison* (43, 45, 50, 92, 96, 108, especially 155-57, 175-76, and 218), but they are never mentioned by Schneidau. Perhaps a record of their encounter is conserved in Forster's unpublished diaries at King's College; as Schneidau's notes show that he has

consulted only published sources and secondary accounts, a reader feels little confidence in his dismissal of "firsthand knowledge."

More important, Forster's interest in questions that intersect with Harrison's writings is well documented in secondary, published accounts. In 1903, for example, Forster took an archaeological cruise to Greece that was guided by E. A. Gardner, a journey that left him bored until the group came to Cnidus, the city in southwestern Turkey that had originally housed the famous Demeter of Cnidus now in the British Museum; there, Forster felt, Greece first took possession of him, possibly because the statue of Demeter was, as his biographer notes, "already a private cult with him" (Furbank, 103-03). In March 1904, in fact, Forster published an essay about the Cnidian Demeter in the *Independent Review*, describing her as a benevolent mother-goddess who had "transcended sex" (see *Abinger Harvest*, 178-90). And in his 1907 novel, *The Longest Journey*, a picture of this statue figures as the only item of decoration in Stephen Wonham's attic, while the statue itself is termed one of the "monuments of our more reticent beliefs" and is assigned a crucial role in the work's symbolic structure (129, 153, 198, 274, 308, 210).

These materials would seem pertinent to Schneidau's claim that Mrs. Ruth Wilcox becomes a "theophany of Demeter," or to his remarks about the treatment of sexuality in *Howards End*. Yet they are never mentioned. Nor is one ever told about Harrison's discussion of Demeter in her classic *Prolegomena* (1903), or about the central concepts of her work, their place in anthropology and classical studies, or their transmission and diffusion. Oddly, though Schneidau is often perceptive about the role of gender in *Howards End*, he never mentions Harrison's view that the chthonic cults were originally part of an essentially matriarchal or matrilineal culture, one in which collectivity still prevailed over individualism. And yet surely it is matrilineality that we see at work in *Howards End*, as the house is given by Ruth Wilcox to Margaret Schlegel in spite of Henry Wilcox's various plans for it, and surely this interest in matrilineality is inseparable from the contemporary development of feminism and its corollary, the growth of an ethos of friendship that, insofar as it undermined marriage as a cultural ideal, had enormous implications for the form of the novel: for whereas the classic Victorian novel typically ended in marriage, the twentieth-century novel was faced with a question mark. That dilemma, in *Howards End*, is resolved with the matrilineal collectivity of the Schlegel sisters inheriting and possessing the house. But it is also found elsewhere in novels of the period. Consider only *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, in which the spiritual legacy of Mrs. Ramsay is transmitted to Lily Brisco through a similar kind of matrilinear descent, and in which the crucial difference between the two women is precisely their attitude toward the institution of marriage. This difference results in the same dilemma at the novel's close: how is the work to end, when it has already been made clear that Lily Brisco and Augustus Carmichael will never marry, but only remain friends? It concludes, we recall, with a kind of ersatz-marriage, the union of the two masses in Lily's painting, which she connects after recalling the missing figure of Mrs. Ramsay. "Only connect," Forster must have mused upon reading this. Not surprisingly, Woolf also evinced considerable interest in Jane Harrison: as early as 1904 she took pains to be introduced to her, and in later years she kept pace with Harrison's life and career, visiting her in Paris

in 1923, publishing her *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* in 1925. Three years later she mourned Harrison's death in one of the most moving passages in that foundational work of modern feminism, *A Room of One's Own* (17). Yet Woolf's name appears only in some incidental comments in this book, while *To the Lighthouse* is never noted at all, and subjects such as the rise of feminism and the crisis of marriage are simply ignored. It is the tragedy of this book that the richness of its close reading is matched only by the poverty of its intellectual, cultural, and social history.

A revealing moment occurs in the final essay of this volume, as Schneidau considers how the force of Ezra Pound's poetry and his ideas are intertwined. To do so, he feels that he must address the question of Pound's anti-Semitism and his admiration for Mussolini:

"Why did he idealize Mussolini, and how is this reflected in the *Cantos*? Pound became an admirer not because Mussolini was an anti-Semite. On the contrary, until 1938 . . . Mussolini was hailed as one of the Jews' protectors: "In 1933 American Jewish publishers selected him as one of the world's twelve 'greatest Christian champions' of the Jews." (If this fact seems shocking, you have more surprises in store.). (251)

Schneidau is alluding to what, after all, is common knowledge in studies of twentieth-century history: that beyond Italy, Mussolini lent support to Zionist groups in the hope they would keep the British preoccupied in Palestine, so furthering his own ambitions around the Mediterranean basin, while inside Italy "racialism was originally alien to Italian fascism." (See Zeev Sternhell, "The Ideology of Fascism," in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976], 356; see also the classic study by Renzo de Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* [Einaudi: Turin, 1962].) This is hardly news, much less "shocking" news. It is a commonplace of discussion about Fascism since at least 1962, and yet one senses that for Schneidau, it really is news.

Summarizing his account of why the modernists were enchanted with fascism, Schneidau returns to the theme that unifies his volume. He writes: ". . . we can explain much of the puzzling and embarrassing mystery of their politics by noting that Fascism was after all an atavistic convulsion, one that held out hopes of actually materializing the past in the present" (258). But surely this is to simplify fascism beyond all recognition, to deny its essential character as a complex and fractured reality in continuous transformation, and to lend it an abstract coherence at the cost of deracinating it from history. To describe the instinctive wisdom of Ruth Wilcox and the ideological aspirations of fascism with the same term, "atavism," is finally to say little of importance about either. One must erase so many layers of cultural, institutional, and ideological mediation that what remains is little more than a phantom. That is the specter that haunts this book at every point where it strays beyond the borders of the text, conceived in essentially New Critical terms.

As the owners of dogs are sometimes said to resemble their pets, so it is that books sometimes come to resemble their subjects. An uncharitable critic might complain that something like this has happened to Schneidau's work,

that he has meditated upon atavism for so long that his work has come to embody it—has become a living specimen of an approach to cultural study that, mercifully, has all but disappeared. But that would be unfair. This book offers many valuable insights into the specific works that Schneidau has chosen to examine, with close readings that are supple, suggestive, and keenly discriminating. It is when it seeks to probe the implications of these readings for our understanding of modernism that a reader is likely to feel disappointed.

Yale University

Lawrence Rainey

Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory by Mike Gane. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. 243. \$49.95, cloth; \$16.95, paper.

If ever the work of a theorist has undergone, and suffered from, the effects of extensive critical hype, it is that of Jean Baudrillard. Mike Gane's study is therefore a welcome effort to reduce such hype by bringing the details and development of this author's project into clear perspective. Gane's title suggests this development, i.e. the movement in Baudrillard's writing from one paradigm to another. From critical theory based on Marx, semiology and sociology (e.g. works of the 1968–72 period such as *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* among others), Baudrillard moved through the "crucial juncture" of rejecting much of Marxist theory in favor of the subsequent development of "fatal theory." This new perspective is based, says Gane, on the "Durkheimian paradigm" in which Baudrillard places himself "as a primitive, as a pre- or anti-rationalist, [in order] to evolve a poetic theoretical analysis of the effects of the most advanced technical transformations in our culture" (5). Gane's own analytical approach consists, first, of situating this project's development within its socio-cultural and critical contexts (two of Part I's three chapters), then of tracing the phases of Baudrillard's development toward "fatal theory" (seven chapters in Parts II and III), and finally (chapter 11) of providing a synthetic and critical overview of Baudrillard's strategies.

Gane clearly states his overall goal: to provide a practice of reading and writing that can encompass Baudrillard's own such practices, i.e. his "double project" or "doubling up of the repertoires of criticism: one based on a radical alterity to the modern system, the other based on radical difference within the system" (12). For Gane seeks a path other than a "productivist" style of reading, one that can show that "to read Baudrillard is to begin to question the effectiveness of a purely political reading, or the reading of the symptomatic type, or indeed of the reading which assumes the homogeneous subject and the homogeneous text as if the project was under the control of a single thought or unified process of decision making" (13). Yet, Gane does find "a coherent and stable framework" in Baudrillard's "adherence to the superiority of the symbolic cultures and the inevitable frailty and vulnerability of the orders of simulation found in the west" (14). It is on the series of contrasts between these two irreconcilable orders that Gane focuses by examining how,

in Baudrillard's work, this "basic contradiction is reproduced" and by situating "an analysis of the first phases of simulation with the attempt to criticise it poetically," in other words, the movement "from critical to fatal theory" (14).

Upon careful perusal of this book, one can locate three major concerns to which Gane devotes his efforts. The first is the rather laborious task of following Baudrillard's development from the early, semiotic-Marxist "critical" period, through the transitional phase of critique and into the more recent manifestations of "fatal theory." This concern occupies the bulk of Gane's study, i.e. sections II and III that provide an extremely important, but nonetheless dense review of Baudrillard's work. What renders Gane's study so valuable is his careful attention, on one hand, to Baudrillard's situation within the shifting socio-cultural context of French (Parisian) intelligentsia and, on the other hand, to Baudrillard's *complete* works, including those not (or partially) translated as well as interviews. Thus, Gane helps the reader follow Baudrillard's reflections on and growing resistance to Marxist and Saussurean positions (chapters 4 & 5), and then in "Baudrillard: theoretical critic" (chapter 6), Gane examines Baudrillard's mid-1970s critique of structural Marxism (notably in the 1973 *The Mirror of Production* [1975 translation]), psychoanalysis (*L'Echange symbolique et la mort* [1976]), and Foucault (the 1977 *Oublier Foucault* [1987 translation]). In each case, Baudrillard turns toward a new position, respectively, utopianism (versus Marxism's "alienation," 114-115), the poetic and the symbolic order (versus psychoanalysis and Saussurean linguistics, 116-119) and simulacrum and the "death of the social" (versus Foucault's conception of power, 120-125).

Resulting from this "period of critique" is the flowering of Baudrillard's new positions in the 1980s: his emphasis on "a black imagery of the mass as the centre of gravity of the society," insisting on society's movement toward "inward implosion" (129-130); a distinct change of style of writing, based on Baudrillard's contention that "the poetic . . . is the most radical threat to the current and conventional understanding of language and expression" (130); and a change of strategy, "to attack the present order not only from the past, and from the continuing theme of the symbolic order, but from within its mass logic" (131). These shifts result formally, says Gane, in "a nostalgic modernism [à la Mallarmé] rather than some kind of futuristic effervescent postmodernism" and in "the initiation of a style of (anti-)sociology as prose-poetry, fiction theory [that] became, immediately, avant-gardist, in a field increasingly dominated by technocratic modes of analysis" (131-132). Closely tracing the shifts in Baudrillard's writings, Gane renders a notable service not only in defining (to the extent possible) this "strategy of the mass" (a "symbolic force of ambivalence . . . [that] neutralises semiological positivity," while being "neither subject nor object" 140), but also of showing the strategy's slippages and inconsistencies that, in fact, seem necessary given Baudrillard's complex assertions. As Gane concludes chapter 7, "The inward implosion of meaning in the masses, therefore, is a popular negative fascism in a sense—one drained of drive and energy, become melancholic. Cool fascism seems a contradictory concept, but we are not far from it" (142).

Gane pursues the same approach, close reading from within Baudrillard's "fatal logic" linked to critical commentary, in three successive chapters (8, 9,

10) devoted, respectively, to *De la Séduction* (1979; 1990 translation), *Les Stratégies fatales* (1983; *Fatal Strategies*, untranslated), and Baudrillard's discovery of "the finished form of the future catastrophe" described in the much commented *Amérique* (1986, 1988 translation). At this point, I need to address Gane's second and third concerns that, while not necessarily linked, nonetheless become so as his study progresses. The second concern is to provide precise, synthetic commentary on Baudrillard's positions, admirable examples of which occur early on in the contextual chapters (2 & 3) that follow the introduction. These provide the reader with valuable insight regarding, first, Baudrillard's debt to post-World War II thinkers and critical debates and, second, his stance vis-à-vis contemporary discussions of postmodernism, Marxism and feminism. In both areas, Gane argues that readers, and Anglophone readers in particular (i.e. those with access only to selected translations), have failed to comprehend fully Baudrillard's complex development, and these chapters are in themselves exceptional contributions for understanding this writer. Similarly, the final chapter, "The double spiral," draws on the detailed, chronological studies that precede it in order to provide a nuanced, critical and nonetheless appreciative commentary regarding the constitutive contradictions and difficulties in Baudrillard's project.

However, linked to this second, synthetic concern throughout the book is a third in which Gane assumes an authoritative stance as *justicier*, as self-appointed lawman staging, as it were, a shoot-out at the po-mo corral. On one hand, Gane is genuinely informative and convincing in his explanation of the definite critical misprision regarding Baudrillard's attitude toward postmodernism since, "far from embracing postmodernism, Baudrillard's whole effort is to combat it" (55). Thus, Gane can scrutinize critiques by various writers, notably Alex Callinicos, Arthur Kroker, Fredric Jameson and Douglas Kellner, in the light of Baudrillard's own positions and statements, however shifting and paradoxical these may be. On the other hand, Gane's unyielding dismissal of Kellner's critique of Baudrillard, indeed his excoriation in a beefy footnote (222-223) of one particular argument of Kellner's, left this reader rather uneasy. For, to devote so much space throughout this study to refuting the work of one critic—not only is "The Marxist Debate" (chapter 2) really the Kroker-Kellner-Gane *différend*, the opening section of chapter 10 treats "The Problem of Kellner's Reading of America"—tries the reader's patience and finally detracts from Gane's otherwise insightful analyses and commentaries.

Moreover, at one point in his introduction, Gane resorts to the prescriptive mode to insist on the propriety of reading Baudrillard, whose "project *must* be regarded as an assault on the 'disenchanted' world from the point of view of a militant of the symbolic (enchanted but cruel) cultures. . . . Baudrillard is a cruel, theoretical extremist, and *must* be read accordingly" (7, my emphasis). Given the many lapses in Baudrillard scholarship and commentary that Gane documents, one can sympathize with his efforts to orient forcefully future readings of Baudrillard, based on his own. But these are, indeed, *Gane's own* readings, and the reader *must not* necessarily read in his fashion (although Gane often provides strong arguments for doing so). Thus, although the density of the central chapters at times requires unflagging commitment on the reader's part, Gane's approach is remarkably and consistently in-

formed and, despite his momentary insistence on a "proper" reading, he does not hesitate to nuance appreciative commentary with trenchant criticism that provides important inflections and clarifications for a complex body of work.

Wayne State University

Charles J. Stivale

THIS PAGE
INTENTIONALLY
LEFT BLANK