Book Reviews

Harold Toliver, *Lyric Provinces in the English Renaissance*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1985. pp. xii, 248. $25.00.

Harold Toliver begins with deceptive clarity: "Poets are not alone in being prepared to see new places in settled ways and describe them in received images. When Henry VII commissioned John Cabot and his sons as representatives to new western lands, he imagined his deputies primarily imposing a transplanted order rather than discovering a new one." Similarly the traveller in the deserts of Utah and California takes with him "the ancient deserts of the Mediterranean and certain biblical expectations of what burning bushes, what gods, or what shepherds shall exist." Clear as all this might be, its centrifugal quality (from poets to travellers) provokes some puzzlement as to where the point might be, and when it might be reached. Is it that writers, like Cabot and other travellers, carry cultural baggage which affects what they see and how they express it ("Literature is inseparable from the rest of discourse")? Or is it that they differ, since they look less to common discourse than to specific literary predecessors (viii)? Perhaps it is rather the "restlessness similar to that of westward exploration . . . in the wandering of lyric personas and in their new terms of address" in the case of such poets as Jonson, Donne, Herbert, Herrick, Milton, Vaughan, and Marvell. How far is "place" going to be the metaphor of the poets and how far that of the critic in this work? The question is not necessarily resolved as the author becomes more specific, as when he says that "the service [G. Herbert] chose in lieu of service to a patron or a Petrarchan lady . . . encouraged self-consciousness about *the location* and the nature of poetry itself" (ix-x; emphasis mine). Perhaps what is meant by "location" might be guessed at in the statement (x-xi) that "[Milton's] imaginative commitment to Eden and elsewhere was a sign of independence," though that "and elsewhere" raises questions which the author should be answering rather than the reader asking at this point.

If this review is not to be mimetic, I had better state my case immediately. Whatever value might reside in Professor Toliver's work is for me considerably reduced by his presentation. As its reader, I am disqualified by an essay-writing boyhood of responding to simple-minded exhortations like "Decide what you want to say, and say it." Not knowing at the end of the day just what it was that Professor Toliver wanted to say, I cannot tell whether or not he has said it. Take, for example, one of his clear sentences: "Pointers in lyric set tone, bridge elements, and establish grammatical relations" (11). This is clear, but provokes the response that so they do in other forms of discourse; what is being said here that is specific to lyric? In other words, what has the reader learned, how has the argument been advanced, by this sentence? On the whole, perhaps, clarity without point is preferable to a passage like this: "The practical matter too is that one who reads 'To Penshurst' or 'Lycidas' is not for the moment conscious of much not cited in some way by Jonson or Milton, the unavoidable questions of genre and influence being complication enough" (xii). Is it "not . . . conscious . . . not cited" that boggles the mind here? Or is it some implicit confusion of the act of reading with the act of critical reflection?

The foregoing may be unfairly irritable, so perhaps we should move to a different level. The chapter on Vaughan is called "Momentum and the Spirit's Passage in Vaughan." Toliver begins by putting things in context for us: confessional and meditative verse was not much written in the periods immediately preceding and immediately following the early seventeenth century; the Civil War gave impetus to meditative forms, as did the model of Herbert's *Temple*. A significant development is the conversion of religious experience into landscape terms, or landscape into expressive and revelatory form. Two pages on Bunyan follow, on the grounds that both he and Vaughan cast spiritual states as topographical progresses and that both were "outsiders for whom the solitary journey has no exact institutional or social equivalents." There is a good comparison here with Milton and Marvell, who have in common with Vaughan "the exploratory figure of solitude locatable by topographical keys" (186). Unfortunately, when comparison gives way to analysis, discontent breaks out again, as when he comments on the last three stanzas of "I walked the other day": "Vaughan's 'O thou' is typical of his personal lyric crossings, which seek to short-circuit the longer evasions of nature and the pilgrimage through it" (190). Is something new being said here about Vaughan's common habit of ending poems with prayers, which began with vocatives addressed to God? If so, what? What does the phrase "the longer evasions of nature" mean? And can it be true to the experience of most readers that at the end of the poem there is a "return to the care-

worn sense of exile"? Is it true that such a poem assumes less confidence (*sc.*, than that of Bunyan) in the open teachability of doctrine? The word occurs in the sixth stanza of the poem itself, and while the "doctrine" of the poem, depending as it does on God's "other book" of Nature as well as on the Bible, might not replicate what may be found in Bunyan, it is in its own context clear enough.

A little later Vaughan is compared with Herbert. Toliver argues (in relation to "I soar and rise / Up to the skies" in "Ascension-Day") that "To soar is clearly not a rational process. The abandonment of Herbert's enclosure and possession for wilderness is the topographical equivalent to impatience with plodding logic and its servant discourse." It seems to me that the difference between Herbert and Vaughan in this respect has less to do with "logic" than with an implicit, and important, difference between the two poets in the way they regarded the relationships between God, Man, and Nature.

To my eye, Toliver misreads the ending of "Regeneration" as he does that of "I walked the other day"; again, for how many readers does it seem true that the "viator" of the poem is at its end little closer to its goal? Or consider this: "The plenitude of scent and of signs only intensifies the absence of sound that might confirm some intent behind the snowy fleeces." I fail to see how this can sensibly refer to the tenth stanza of the poem, though in context it appears to, since the whispered *where I please* can hardly correspond to "absence of sound." What the sentence actually says appears to relate to the poem's sixth stanza, with its "vital gold" and its "spice." But "all the ear lay hush" hardly amounts to deprivation. We should probably emend here, as James Carscallen has suggested, to relate the line to Habakkuk 2:20: "But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him," in which case lack of intent is hardly what the last line of the sixth stanza suggests. But even without emendation, there is still the music of the "little fountain" of stanza seven. I find unhelpful the remark that "Scriptural parallels offer assistance, but I find them less decisive here than other interpreters do." When we turn to the note to find out which scriptural parallels, we find references to the primrose path, the fountain, and the grove; and to the commentators Barbara Lewalski and Jonathan Post. This sketchy gesture towards Vaughan scholarship is no more helpful than the unargued statement in the text, or than the notion with which Toliver ends this paragraph, that scripture is written in "metaphoric code" in order to veil secrets! There is a similar failure to read accurately and to argue cogently in the reading of "The Stone": "not even savages are too remote to lack a confessional" is a *very* odd reading of the

proverbial "ev'ry bush is somethings booth." "Savages"? "Confessional"?

The chapter on Vaughan is fairly representative of the book as a whole, with its scattered perceptions hidden away in the verbiage. It is better, because more concrete, than some stretches. I found the section on "Lycidas" especially unrewarding, and may need to ponder for some time the thought that "the central project of Milton's poetry . . . is to assimilate one level or one realm to another with checks and balances, in a probing of each individually and of their interactions and analogies" (58). The weaknesses of this book are not remarkable in themselves. Indeed what makes it particularly painful to contemplate is the knowledge that it has too many companions in its insistence on compounding the incapacity to read accurately with the refusal to write clearly.

Simon Fraser University ALAN RUDRUM

Daniel R. Schwarz, *The Humanistic Heritage: Critical Theories of the English Novel from James to Hillis Miller*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1986. pp. 282. $29.95; $15.95 pb.

In the opening chapter of *The Humanistic Heritage*, Daniel Schwarz promises a study that will survey, critique, and reconcile the various criticisms of the novel produced in England and America since Henry James. His plan is an ambitious one: to summarize the positions of several major critics, to overturn these and expose their fundamental ideologies, to show, above all, that however different overtly, these various approaches are linked by a common "humanism." The motive behind the enterprise is a desire to deliver "traditional" critics "sent . . . to the barricades" by structuralism, Marxism, and deconstruction. The beleaguered humanist, says Schwarz, will be heartened by his survey of that "corpus of interpretive material" produced prior to the rise of Barthes and Derrida — a body of work that proves on inspection "remarkable in its quality" and admirably "responsive to the literature it addresses" (2). He will also be relieved to discover that the daunting terminology of "recent" criticism conceals many concepts far from new. The various differences that divide the Anglo-American humanist and the French post-structuralist will prove counterbalanced by as many similarities, and the reader will emerge convinced of the possibility of a "dialogue" between the two.

Schwarz's first intention, then, is to provide a comprehensive handbook of major approaches to the novel, disparate studies that he will then subsume under the general rubric of the "humanistic heritage." The reader envisions, at his instigation, a work com-

parable in scope to Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* or Lentricchia's *After the New Criticism*, its differences lying only in its focus on criticism of the novel, in particular, and its humanist rather than Marxist ideology. When we move past Schwarz's promises into the body of his study, however, *The Humanistic Heritage* proves frustrating where precisely those other surveys satisfy. The individual accounts of James, Lubbock, Forster, Leavis, Van Ghent, Watt, Frye, Auerbach, Booth, Kermode, Kettle, Williams, and Miller fail, first of all, to articulate what is *unique* about the contributions of each of these writers. They emphasize similarity at the expense of difference: all of these critics, in spite of being initially distinguished on these grounds, are said to be concerned with both a novel's form and its content; all are Romantics in granting a certain degree of autonomy to the created text; all are Utilitarians in their concern for the moral, social, or political effects of the act of reading. Schwarz's remarks on the *Weltanschauung* informing the work of each critic, too, are remarkably alike in all cases. Rather than portraying a company of individuals, he constantly aspires to create a representative Modern Critic — a firm believer in the inextricable link between aesthetic and moral values and in the power of theory to provide consolation in the world's chaos.

Perhaps the most elusive and discomfiting segments of each chapter, however, are those where Schwarz outlines his objections to the various critical approaches, for unlike Eagleton and Lentricchia he fires his shots from constantly shifting ground. For example, Dorothy Van Ghent is reprimanded for her failure to take into account in her criticism the "grammar of historical or economic cause and effect" (92), and Raymond Williams is reprimanded for slighting individual genius in his emphasis on that grammar. Booth is criticized for his aversion to the moral values implicit in the modern novel and Kettle for disliking those works that reveal no faith in progress. Van Ghent fails because she does not prove a phenomenologist; Watt because he is not a genre critic; Miller because he neglects to consider the "repetitions" around which novels are structured from a Freudian perspective. For the most part, the flaws Schwarz identifies in each critic are sins of omission. And in the absence of any argument for one approach over another, in an atmosphere avowedly pluralistic, attacks on such grounds seem both arbitrary and aimless.

The Humanistic Heritage fails as a reference work, but does it succeed at its other purpose — conciliation? Does it in fact demonstrate that "traditional" and "recent" critics are more united in purpose than the former have feared? Once again, our judgement must be negative. The first difficulty lies in the very way Schwarz formulates his thesis. It is not at all clear which operating principles

he considers distinguish the "traditional" critic. Nor is it acceptable for him to regard "recent" criticisms as monolithic: he casts a suspicious eye on Barthes, Derrida, Eagleton, and the critics of reader-response, as if there were no variation in their methods or purposes. Our uncertainty about Schwarz's categories leads to further confusion about the intended function of his succession of monographs. Are we, as he sometimes suggests, to regard all of the theorists from James through to Kermode as "traditional," and Kettle, Williams, and Miller as representatives of the "recent"? Are we then to accept Kettle's concern with aesthetic as well as political issues, Williams's belief that the individual voice can transcend the socially determined effects of language, Miller's observable lapses into essentialist discourse, as sufficient evidence for the continuity of what we habitually consider conservative and radical camps? If this is so, the representation on the Marxist and post-structuralist side is embarrassingly poor. If, on the other hand, Schwarz regards all of the approaches featured as part of the conservative heritage, his confrontation of radical methods seems even more timid. His only efforts to diminish the challenge posed by recent criticisms are several scattered remarks about how many of their central concepts have been prefigured: the consciousness of intertextuality by Frye, the recognition of the creative role of the reader by Leavis, Van Ghent, and Booth, the scepticism about authorial presence by New Critical watchmen of intentional fallacies. None of these potentially valuable observations are pursued with any theoretical rigour. Nor does Schwarz develop his occasional inclination to resolve critical disputes *pragmatically*: to assess the significance of theoretical differences by comparing differences in ensuing *practice*. The upshot of his refusal to grapple with radical approaches is a profound sense that no significant common ground at all has been established. Indeed, we are left fully convinced that the array of old and new criticisms offers us a very real *choice*. Schwarz's own preference for the former is evident from his constant if veiled suspicion of the latter — an attitude that erupts occasionally into dark *ad hominem* attacks on unidentified radical critics. His argument for adopting "traditional" approaches amounts to little more, ultimately, than the defensive and lame observation that these constitute viable "alternatives" to what is frightening and new (167).

The failure of *The Humanistic Heritage*, then, can be traced to two contrary impulses in Schwarz: a pluralist's refusal to take a stand and a monist's tendency to defuse theories threatening to his own by claiming to share with them certain common denominators. "I have sought to enact in my discussions," he asserts in a statement as revealing as it is paradoxical, "the eclecticism, pluralism, and

open-mindedness of an enlightened humanism" (2). In planning his study, Schwarz would have done well to have heeded the warning of the most admired of critics cited; in "Pluralism in the Classroom," Wayne Booth says: "Any effort to be a pluralist . . . can be nothing more than a pretense that is likely to produce not good solid tubs that will *contain* at least *something*, but leaky vessels containing nothing and thus doing nothing for the world" (*Critical Inquiry* 12.3 [1986]: 469-70). He would have proven a much more sympathetic voice, too, had he admitted with Booth that no self-proclaimed pluralism can ever be completely honoured in practice. Had he been more self-conscious about his motives and methods, *The Humanistic Heritage* might indeed have succeeded in opening up a conversation between antagonistic "traditional" and "recent" critics. As it stands, his attempt to mediate will only encourage complacency in the former, fury in the latter, and frustration in the curious spectator.

Queen's University PATRICIA RAE

Richard Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception.* Lewisberg: Bucknell UP; London and Toronto: Associated UP, 1986. pp. 189. $26.50.

Richard Hornby's *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* is a refreshing marriage of contemporary critical thought and good old-fashioned clarity of style, an absorbing discussion of dramatic theory satisfyingly illuminated with practical criticism. The dramatic theory is related to and illustrated by references to a variety of our cultural codes, from mathematics to Freudian psychology. The plays chosen for practical criticism range from Sophocles' *Oedipus* to Pinter's *Betrayal.* The result is stimulating reading, so important a contribution to dramatic criticism that whatever disagreements one may have with specific points here and there seem trivial by comparison with the joy of sharing Hornby's perceptive observations about drama.

Hornby begins with a consideration of the limitations of the realistic doctrine, which views all theatre in terms of a binary opposition between the realistic and the anti-realistic. He argues that "no plays, however 'realistic,' reflect life directly; all plays, however 'unrealistic,' are semiological devices for categorizing and measuring life indirectly." Any play relates to life only through its relationship to other plays, other art forms, and culture generally; we interpret life through this drama/culture complex, which provides us with the means to describe reality. The distinction between the hack playwright and the serious playwright is that the former simply rein-

forces the existing drama/culture complex, while the latter questions some of its elements by addressing the conventions and traditions by which society views the world. The realistic doctrine, Hornby argues, devalues drama by depicting it as a passive reflector of reality; drama is better seen as a means by which we perceive reality.

While all plays are more about drama than about life and therefore metadramatic in a sense, then, the degree to which a playwright deliberately employs metadramatic devices varies. Hornby discusses six types of overt metadrama, six methods of producing the dislocation of perception that constitutes the metadramatic experience of estrangement or alienation. These are the play within the play, the ceremony within the play, role playing within the role, literary or real-life reference, self reference, and the theme of perception. The first five are treated in a chapter apiece; the last is discussed in six shorter chapters, each about a play that expresses the theme of perception in some way: in addition to *Oedipus* and *Betrayal*, Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Büchner's *Woyzeck*, Strindberg's *The Father*, and Ibsen's *The Master Builder*.

In the early chapters, a survey of each type of metadrama is offered, so that one gets a sense of the relative importance of each in different eras of drama, but their main appeal is in Hornby's general comments about the function of each type. The play within the play raises existential questions, for instance, while role-playing within the role raises questions of identity. In the course of these discussions, some of Hornby's most interesting observations about the relationship between theatre and society at large are developed, such as society's views on actors in light of identity theory.

Hornby's assertion that important plays challenge dramatic conventions means that such plays question the means by which we perceive reality. This recognition leads Hornby to focus on perception as a dramatic *theme* quite apart from the other metadramatic devices. Much of his discussion of the plays is informed by Freud's distinction between primary process thinking (intuitive, subjective) and secondary process thinking (logical, objective). The former is seen as more natural and pleasurable — and the natural domain of drama — while the latter is harder work, the domain of science. *Oedipus*, *The Father*, and *The Master Builder* embody conflicts in which the division between these two modes of thought are easily seen: Oedipus, the Captain, and Solness embrace logical thought, and all must yield to the natural, intuitive force represented by Teiresias, the women, and Hilda. In *As You Like It*, of course, the forest is the subjective "green world." *Woyzeck* is discussed not as a work left incomplete at Büchner's death but as one that is appropriately fragmented and contradictory, a puzzle to be experienced rather than solved, because it is about the ambiguity of perception.

Betrayal Hornby calls a deconstruction of realism, because although its structure invites us to psychologize, doing so gets us nowhere. For Pinter, emotional truth is more important than objective fact. Here at the end of the book, Hornby reminds us of his opening attack on the realistic doctrine, which is inadequate to a study of Pinter because its measure is the observation of life, not the experience of it.

Readers may not agree with some of Hornby's assumptions — that Chekhov is one of the great writers of tragedy, for instance — or even his carefully argued conclusions — for example, that Prince Hal's "I know you all, and will awhile uphold / The unyoked humor of your idleness" speech is an instance of self-reference, with "you" the audience and "playing holidays" the dramatic action itself. We may question the validity of some generalizations about audience response: involuntary role-playing like Malvolio's makes me more, not less, uneasy than such voluntary role-playing as Portia's, despite Hornby's claim to the contrary. But the virtues of *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* easily outweigh such reservations, which are inevitable differences of opinion. Apart from the interest of some of the practical criticism, among which that of *The Master Builder* and *The Father* is most compelling, three virtues are particularly noteworthy. First, Hornby makes some of the fascinating ideas of structuralist and post-structuralist theory more accessible by dispensing with or offering extended, concrete illustrations of the jargon that so often makes discussions of theory more obscure than they need to be. This book (like his earlier structuralist study, *Script into Performance*) is for anyone who has had enough of the painful prose of leading theorists and yearns for an enjoyable discussion of theatre that is well informed by contemporary theory. Second, such breadth of thought is always refreshing in our age of over-specialization. Hornby's illustrations are drawn from popular culture and mathematics as well as plays from a variety of cultures and genres, and the theory is built on a foundation of philosophy, psychology, and experience of both literary and theatrical disciplines.

Finally, Hornby keeps us aware of drama's important function — and for that matter, though he doesn't mention it, the function of other literature — as both a means of expressing intuitive, experiential truths and a means of exploring conflicting perceptions of thought. The reminder is especially important when although ours is a culture that privileges rational, scientific thought, even the physicists have begun to doubt the possibility of total objectivity. Hornby asserts that it is in times of rapid change, during which the ways in which we perceive reality are altered, that great drama is stimulated. Is it also that secondary process thinking was privileged and primary

process thinking devalued both for the ancient Greeks and in the Western world from the Renaissance on? Perhaps in the great ages of drama, when logical and objective thought is emphasized, playwrights, who are more intuitive thinkers, are moved to question the prevailing assumptions and to remind us of the inevitable impact, and sometimes of the positive value, of our intuitive, subjective mode of thought.

SUSAN STONE-BLACKBURN

Stanley A. Atherton and Satendra P. Nandan, eds., *Creative Writing From Fiji.* Fiji Writers' Association: Vision International Publishers, 1985. pp. viii, 176. $8.00.

This English-language anthology has resulted from the collaborative efforts of a Canadian (Atherton) and a Fijian scholar (Nandan) and has received financial assistance from the Australian and Canadian governments and from the Fiji Writers' Association. The volume grew from the occasion, organized by Dr. Nandan, of the fifth triennial conference of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in Fiji in January 1980. The conference focused attention on the development of an indigenous Fijian literature, independent of Eurocentric visions of life in the South Pacific, and the editors wished to consolidate such interest with a representative collection of each of the major genres (drama, fiction, and poetry), finding space for the work of younger as well as more established writers in English.

In the light of the May 1987 military coup in Fiji, which overthrew the democratically elected government of the coalition Fiji Labour Party and the National Federation Party, in which Dr. Nandan was Minister of Health and Social Welfare, this volume takes on a renewed immediacy. The vision of Fiji it promotes is a vision the military coup has sought to destroy. The editors avoid terms of ethnic designation such as "European" or "Indo-Fijian," referring instead to all Fijian citizens as "Fijian." Just as Canadian writers such as Joy Kogawa resent being referred to as "hyphenated Canadians," so too do the descendants of immigrants to Fiji claim an unhyphenated nationality. This volume represents a vision of Fijian literature as culturally diverse but united by a "commitment to record and interpret local experience and perceptions without condescension." The commitment to the local place unites Fijians of all racial origins and their Fijian identity is a multicultural one. Such a vision has been violently challenged by the coup, which sought to aggravate racial tensions and create false divisions among Fijian citizens. This is therefore an important book for several rea-

sons. It presents a humane, civilized, and forward-looking vision of a united Fiji, united around local concerns and growing from a richly based culture. It introduces the achievements already made in this direction by a wide variety of writers, and its seeks to encourage younger writers to continue the explorations it has begun.

Students of the post-colonial literatures in English will recognize many common patterns here. There is the reclaiming of the past from Eurocentric versions of what happened, a looking back to the indigenous Fijian village experience and to the *girmit* experience of the indentured Indian labourers, brought over from 1879 to 1916 to work the cane fields. There is ironic social commentary on the deficiencies of the present, particularly the pressures created by tourism: "These are hard times, my love. / Out in the streets they are peddling our culture" (Nemani Mati, "Hard Times"). Many of these stories reveal uncertainties about identity, about how to act in new situations (Premlata Banfal, "The Magistrate"), about how to value the local when balanced against the imported (Vanessa Griffen, "The Concert"), or about how to feel a part of a larger group while retaining one's own identity (Manik Reddy, "Cripple No More"). In many of these, undercurrents of racial violence and hopes for a more harmonious future coexist in uneasy juxtaposition. Rajesh, the Indo-Fijian narrator of "Cripple No More," is befriended by a Fijian girl who gives him "a new hope for life." When asked to sing around the village fire, he composes "a made-up song singing one line in Indian and again in Fijian": "you are my people, I am your son. . . ." This moment of togetherness is destroyed the next day by the jealous violence of a few Fijian boys. The story implies that the majority of Fijians wish for cultural harmony and togetherness but that this potential can easily be destroyed by the unthinking violence of a few.

There are stories of dislocation and change, of growing up and away (Vanessa Griffen, "The New Road"), and of being trapped between the sociable demands of an older communal way of living and the new demands of a monetary society (Makereta Waqavonovono, "Friday Night"). There are well-made stories with O. Henry-style ironic twists at their conclusion (Akanisi Sobusobu, "The Taboo"), stories that use traditional myth to illuminate present human relations, between man and woman (Raymond Pillai, "Laxmi") and between Fijians of indigenous and immigrant origins (Som Prakash, "An Act of Love"), and many slices of life. But in each of these it is the characteristically Fijian context — voice, place, and history — that gives the work its immediacy and its difference.

For the Canadian reader, this is an unfamiliar idiom. The glossaries of Fijian and Hindi words at the back provide some help,

but the rhythms and references must still be entered into with a willingness to shed preconceptions, about what sounds right as well as about subject matter. The idyllic South Sea paradise, dream of a Canadian winter, is not to be found here. Instead, the questions all of us must ask of our lives when dissatisfied with what we see around us:

> i cry and swear
> and curse the nature of things
> but whose fault i asked
> is it mine
> is it yours
> or is it ours
> (Nemani Mati, "Reflections on a Night Out in Town")

And:

> O, whose nativity? O, whose delight?
> Island of evil-doers
> rotten to the core
> innocence and beauty never born in you
> Antiquity forgot, customs not known
> (Seri, "Fiji")

The editors tell us that this volume proves that "the process of mapping the national consciousness in literature has begun." It is a diverse, fascinating, and troubling map they provide us, a map whose boundaries are still in dispute, whose material is volatile and challenging. There is much for us to learn here. I hope this volume will be widely read, both within and outside Fiji.

University of British Columbia DIANA BRYDON

Ellen Pollak, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985. pp. xii, 239. $18.95.

It would not be a mistake to understand the colon in the title of Ellen Pollak's important study of a major body of Augustan verse satire as an unvoiced conjunction; in the title, as in the book, the concerns of two sometimes rival methodologies — formalist poetics and ideology critique — are hinged together by Pollak's focus on eighteenth-century formulations of sexual myth or gender.

Pollak begins her study by defining the wider socio-political context of her subject: she approaches Swift and Pope as active if critical participants in the polemic of modernism that preoccupied the early eighteenth century and that is more readily associated with the rise of the novel than with Augustan satire. Pollak starts from

the premise that the transition from aristocratic neoclassicism to bourgeois modernism offers us the opportunity to catch a historically continuous patriarchy in the act of updating its myths. She focuses on one of those mythic forms, bourgeois sexual mythology, and, turning to literature as a particularly dense repository of myth, she reads the verse satires of Swift and Pope as responses to its terms and tensions. As she proceeds, Pollak is equally attentive to the demands of her critical method and to those of the history she takes as her subject. Her feminist readings displace the still-dominant critical conception of Swift and Pope as twin "Tory satirists" in favour of the pressing concerns of gender politics. But Pollak also justifies her focus on sexual mythology by elucidating the importance of sexual difference to one of the central terms of the new ideology: individualism. In Pollak's analysis, "the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries mark a critical point in the codification of modern strategies for conceptualizing women" because, in that period, "new terms in keeping with . . . individualist traditions gradually evolved to accommodate the ongoing subordination of women to men" (2). Pollak could have argued more closely here, but she nevertheless gives us a picture of the "natural" private self threatened by the fact of its dissemination as a set of powerful cultural codes. She describes an ideology of bourgeois individualism that is particularly vulnerable to visible sexual difference (which would expose its artifice) and that thus deploys against that difference a sexual mythology that substitutes itself for history and also "accommodates and neutralizes" (64) contradictions within the ideology that indicate the differences of others. Pollak is interested in how what she calls "the limits of difference" are played out in terms of gender, and she places Swift and Pope within this dynamic: in *The Poetics of Sexual Myth*, the demands of individualism find Swift and Pope "both seriously engaged by the possibilities and limits of situating value in the self. In their poems about women, they were inescapably confronted with the necessity of establishing some relation to what were becoming . . . the codes of modern sexual ideology" (8).

Pollak identifies one centre of this ideology as the eighteenth-century's "Myth of Passive Womanhood," and she prefaces her rereading of Swift and Pope with a brief survey of the emergence of the passive ideal in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and of its persistence within twentieth-century interpretations of history and literature. She uses Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* to exemplify the errors of "Whig" interpretations of history, and then moves past Stone through Fox-Genovese's "Property and Patriarchy in Classical Bourgeoisie Political Theory" to an understanding that the eighteenth

century purveyed a "bourgeois myth of woman that was not self-evidently more benevolent than earlier attitudes simply because it presented itself that way" (26). Pollak's readings of sexual mythologies proceed from the distinction she makes in this chapter between women's history and history's myths about women. Drawing from the work of social and economic historians, she reviews the economic changes that diminished women's productivity in the eighteenth century, and concludes that "in the working classes, the direct economic contribution of women to family welfare was becoming subsidiary to that of men, while in the more affluent classes it was becoming superfluous" (31). Pollak argues that this superfluity is transformed from an economic phenomenon into a gender ideology. Woman's growing economic irrelevance correlates with her idealization in marriage: "as the burden of productivity fell increasingly on men, women became the embodiment of moral value, exemplifying at her best . . . a passive and contemplative ideal" (42). And this ideal — that of woman as a transferable repository of value — serves again the economic ends of primogeniture and estate accumulation.

The bulk of Pollak's study is devoted to her readings of poems — *The Rape of the Lock*, *Epistle to a Lady*, "Cadenus and Vanessa," and Swift's scatological poems — and it is here that Pollak really comes into her own. While she lays her theoretical ground carefully, she argues with more force and thoroughness when she moves into close readings of poetic language. Her early chapters are absolutely necessary, but they retain very much the feel of prefatory material. Indeed, my main criticism of her handling of the historical material is that it entices one into other books and away from her own. But her readings of Pope and Swift are timely, provocative, and well argued: Pollak respects literary history but does not find it to be an end in itself. I think her reading of *The Rape of the Lock*, with which she very cannily begins, is her best — in part because she treats the large critical history that the poem carries with it as part of her subject. Pollak's focus on the ideology of Augustan poetics produces a reversal in the usual assessment of Swift and Pope as poets. Swift, or rather "the decentered character of Swift's vision," is the hero of the piece. Swift resists the "immunizing accommodations" that Pope ratifies. "Meaning, in Swift's texts, is generated not — as it is in Pope's — at the point of poised reconciliation between the contrary terms of a single epistemological or mythic structure (such as between the contradictory nature of Belinda as goddess and tease, or of man as glory and jest); it is produced rather, at the point where two or more heterogeneous systems of signification meet, engage, and in interacting become the mutual critics of the logic of one another's terms" (17). In preferring Swift, Pollak issues a challenge to an aesthetics of literature.

Swift, for Pollak, "makes a certain social language fail and, because I conceive the aesthetic as a function of ideology, that linguistic 'failure' speaks more eloquently to me than all of Pope's aesthetic flawlessness" (182). The power of Swift's failure "suggests that Swift is 'better' because he's 'worse,' and 'worse' is 'better' when value is mediated by the poetic imperative of an alienating ideology" (182-83).

I have some reservations about Pollak's book. Despite the strength of its focus, it lacks a unifying narrative and its parts (theoretical introduction, historical context, reading of Pope, reading of Swift, conclusion) fall away from each other. Pollak's concentration on the mainstream suppression of women oddly polarizes an analysis of difference, as if there were only one difference. And, finally, Pollak's eclecticism may offer gender up as the mediating example: the exemplary woman who is exchanged in the marriage between the opposing houses of poetics and ideology. To the extent that Pollak derives gender study from the traditional, legitimizing patrimonies of formalism and ideology critique, and to the extent that she stresses its ability to enlarge those patrimonies, her own rhetoric becomes accommodating and edges towards Pope's. But these reservations cannot detract from the importance of this book's challenge and the strength of its execution.

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Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1986. pp. 210. $23.00.

Paul Douglass clearly states the purpose of *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature* in his opening paragraph: its aim is "to revaluate Bergson's philosophy in relation to American literature" (1). He wisely restricts his study by asserting that he will not "attempt a comprehensive survey of Bergsonian influences in American writers," but rather that he "seeks to reintroduce a Bergsonian vocabulary in discussion of American literary Modernism by showing how Bergson's ideas of openness, containment, and tension illuminate the theory and practice of several major American writers" (1). He focuses primarily on T. S. Eliot's and William Faulkner's Bergsonian heritage and gives briefer discussions of the Bergsonian legacy in the works of the Southern New Critics and four other modern American writers: Henry Miller, Robert Frost, Thomas Wolfe, and Gertrude Stein. Although much of this ground has been covered before, as Douglass admits, his treatment of the material is innovative and, on the whole, a worthwhile addition to the already numerous studies of Bergson and various American writers.

The study's basic thesis is fairly straightforward and may be briefly summarized here. Henri Bergson was one of the leading thinkers of his age and he thus had a profound impact on it. T. S. Eliot was openly interested in Bergson, and, contrary to what many critics believe, most of Eliot's work reflects the impact of Bergson's philosophy. Through Eliot's work and likely through some direct contact with Bergson's own work, the Southern New Critics arrived at views of literature and the practice of criticism which are in some ways Bergsonian. Through Eliot, the New Critics, and perhaps through direct encounters with Bergson's writings, Faulkner developed a writing style that was markedly Bergsonian. Finally, Bergson's ideas spread to other American Modernists in much the same way as they reached Faulkner: indirectly through Eliot and others, and directly through contact with Bergson's own works. Douglass's final contention, that "modern American literature is profoundly entangled with Bergson" (177), depends on his opening hypothesis, that there was a stronger bond between Bergsonian philosophy and Eliot's own ideas than most critics are generally willing to admit. He therefore devotes over half of his study to establishing the Bergson-Eliot connection. In this part of his study Douglass is most convincing, for he offers new and important insights into Eliot's work.

In the first two chapters Douglass explains why Bergson's philosophy has often been misrepresented or overlooked by critics of modern literature. He also distinguishes between Bergson and those of his disciples who espoused variations of his ideas; this Bergsonism, Douglass argues, often disagrees with Bergson's own teachings, thus detracting from the real philosophy and frequently being mistaken for it. Douglass contends that the conventional views of Bergson as either a time-philosopher or an advocate of vitalism are valid but limiting. Taking his direction from Bergson's own comments, Douglass focuses on the essential dualism of the philosophy. He examines Bergson's time theory using the Bergsonian model of dualism and he concludes that "Bergson emphasizes that the moment in some sense *creates itself*, and therefore gives augury of something profound and doublesided, something that can know itself as always *more* than itself, a creative act surrounded by forces of repression always deflecting, but never completely stifling that impetus" (10). Douglass further outlines the duality when he says that "with its dual emphasis on the necessary rigidities of the poet's medium and the pure mobility of experience, Bergson's philosophy and aesthetic theory give important and neglected insight into the practice of many English-speaking writers of this century" (28). Thus Douglass sees Bergson's philosophy as providing the vocabulary with which we may discuss modern literature: the writer is aware of

the limits of language (Bergson's rigid form or matter) and also aware of the limitless potential of experience (Bergson's pure mobility or spirit), and he must develop the tension between the two in order to create great literature.

Douglass's two chapters on Eliot, the book's centrepiece, provide a very thorough account of the nature and extent of Bergson's influence on Eliot. Drawing on a wide variety of sources — Eliot's own writings, including his unpublished essay on Bergson's philosophy, as well as the works of F. H. Bradley, Piers Gray, and others — Douglass soon establishes that "Eliot's vocabulary and operative principles owe a debt to Bergson's thought" (63). He then explores Eliot's criticism, pointing out its Bergsonian nature and often showing how major concerns of Eliot are rooted in Bergson's thought. For example, Douglass contends that Eliot's idea of artistic impersonality may be seen as an example of Bergson's intuition: "It is the impersonality of intuition, an 'extinction of personality' in the face of and for the sake of revealing an underlying reality"; "the artist struggles not to deny the value of personal experience, not to abandon the world of 'appearance,' but to 'transmute his personal' and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal" (76). Such examples convince the reader that Eliot's criticism is, indeed, Bergsonian. Douglass's Bergsonian interpretations of Eliot's poetry — focusing on the ideas of Time, Intuition, and Self-knowledge — strengthen his case. He argues that Eliot's *oeuvre* is a whole, organic unit culminating in *Four Quartets*, which "represents the exploration and resolution of the crucial issue of Eliot's career as a poet" (104). This "crucial issue" is found in the "Bergsonian idea that poetry furnishes 'consciousness with an immaterial body in which to incarnate itself'" (95). By the end of the fourth chapter, Douglass has made his case.

In the next four chapters, Douglass expands his focus beyond Eliot and Bergson. Most convincing are the two chapters on Faulkner. In the first, he criticizes "the peculiarities and superficialities generated by the use of Bergson to analyze Faulkner's characters and values independently of his narrative structures" (124). Douglass goes on to analyze Faulkner's stream of consciousness style of writing, which he calls "that 'uninterrupted sentence,'" stating that it is "here Bergson can be of real help, if we are willing to admit the nature of language into the discussion, and to see that Faulkner, like Eliot, looks on final form as the goal as well as potentially the 'enemy'" (124). In the second, on the often-studied topic of Faulkner's Bergsonian characters, he avoids going over familiar ground by shifting his focus to argue that "Faulkner's implicit theory of self and memory parallels Bergson's with remarkable exactness. Like Bergson, he sees life as endless creation" (142). Douglass's pene-

trating Bergsonian analysis of several characters, including Benjy Compson and Joe Christmas, also adds weight to his contentions about Bergson's role.

The two more general chapters are much less forceful. In chapter five, "Eliot, Bergson, and the Southern Critics," Douglass states that the Southern critics "clearly use [Bergsonian] vocabulary to argue the validity of aesthetic experience as a mode of knowing. In this, they follow in Eliot's footsteps, disseminating Bergsonian principles of critical and literary theory among American writers of the thirties and forties" (107). Although his brief discussion supports this, a more detailed account would aid his case considerably. In his final chapter, when Douglass turns to other American writers, he is regrettably brief. Although the Bergsonian traits of these writers have been studied by others, a more expansive treatment here would permit Douglass's study to end on an appropriately high note. The reservations about these two chapters are minor, however, and when we remember Douglass's contention that "this volume does not attempt to be comprehensive" (118) we should not demand that it be comprehensive. The study does what it set out to do: it "restore[s] Bergson's dualism to the discussion of American literature" and it demonstrates that there is "a genuine consistency of approach, argumentation, and vocabulary among major American writers between the wars, and that vocabulary emerges from a dialogue in which Bergson was the most important single voice" (175). The study is a valuable contribution to the field of American Modernism: it will certainly be of interest to students of Bergson, Eliot, and American literature.

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Books Received

BESSAI, DIANE, and DON KERR, eds. *NeWest Plays by Women.* Edmonton: NeWest, 1987. pp. xvii, 251. Unpriced pb.

DUDEK, LOUIS. *Zembla's Rocks.* Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1986. pp. 141. $9.95 pb.

CURRY, RALPH L., ed. *The Leacock Medal Treasury.* Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1984. pp. 359. $11.95 pb.

FLETCHER, M. D. *Contemporary Political Satire: Narrative Strategies in the Post-Modern Context.* Lanham, Md.: UP of America, 1987. pp. xvi, 185. $25.00; $12.75 pb.

HEUSER, ALAN, ed. *Selected Literary Criticism of Louis MacNiece.* Oxford: OUP, 1987. pp. xxiv, 279. $53.75.

HICKS, JOHN V. *Side Glances: Notes on the Writer's Craft.* Saskatoon: Thistledown, 1987. pp. 78. $6.95 pb.

LYDENBERG, ROBIN. *Word Cultures: Radical Theory and Practice in William S. Burroughs' Fiction.* Champaign: U of Illinois P, 1987. pp. xvi, 205. $24.95.

MACDONALD, RONALD R. *The Burial-Places of Memory: Epic Underworlds in Vergil, Dante, and Milton.* Amherst, Mass.: U of Massachusetts P, 1987. pp. x, 223. $20.00.

NEHAMUS, ALEXANDER. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1985. pp. xiv, 261. $20.00; $9.95 pb.

ROSTON, MURRAY. *Renaissance Perspectives in Literature and the Visual Arts.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987. pp. xiv, 379. $45.00.

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