

BOOK REVIEWS

*GEORGE L. HART and HANK HEIFETZ, trans, and eds. *The Four Hundred Songs of War and Wisdom: An Anthology of Poems from the Classical Tamil: The Purananuru*. Columbia University Press, New York: 2000. Pp 435 paper US \$25.50; hardcover US \$73.50.

In this volume the Anglophone reader is presented, for the first time with a complete translation of the *Purananuru*, a South Indian anthology of 400 poems composed in old Tamil between the first and third centuries C.E (although the compilation itself may be as late as the thirteenth century). It represents the work of more than 150 poets, including at least 10 women, and it is among the earliest surviving works in Tamil. According to George Hart, it was written before the northern Indian Aryan culture had significantly penetrated the south, and it is therefore of particular importance for the study of pre-Aryan India, and, more generally, for our understanding of the ways in which the religious, cultural and linguistic history of South Asia developed. Perhaps of most interest for the non-specialist reader is Hart's claim that the *Purananuru* is a great work of literature with a universal appeal, concerning itself with "living and dying, despair, poverty, love, and the changing nature of existence" (xv). Moreover, it apparently does so from an almost agnostic, or open-minded perspective, making no metaphysical assumptions about the nature of existence, confronting it, instead, as an unsolved mystery. It would seem ripe, therefore, for western appreciation.

The literal meaning of *Purananuru* is "The Four Hundred [Poems] About the Exterior." The anthology belongs, therefore, to the category of literature that deals with life outside the family: with "the king and the king's wars, greatness, and generosity; ethics; and death and dying" (xvi). (The other category, "interior" literature, deals with love between men and women.) Most of the poems are addressed to kings, and many were actually written by them; praise of kings is therefore a dominant theme, and from one perspective the anthology is a treatise on kingship. In his excellent introduction (which deals with both cultural context and literary form), George Hart explains that the society the *Purananuru* describes revolved around three basic features: king, a woman's purity, and a system of caste. Kings were locked into a

vicious struggle for supremacy, ensuring that the Tamil area at the time was in a state of incessant warfare. (It is interesting to note that in modern times the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka have drawn directly on the *Purananuru* for some of their martial vocabulary and ideology.) In the poems war is frequently compared, through a whole series metaphors, to the harvest: the king is a "sort of machine designed to metamorphose dangerous power — the killing on the battlefield — into its auspicious analogue — the production and harvesting of grain" (xix). This reflects the underlying assumption that, by acting as a kind of channel for the endemic disorder, chaos and death of the world, the king makes order possible.

Apart from kings themselves, who composed these poems? According to Hart, they were produced by a group of high-caste men and women who called themselves "people of knowledge." Their literary models were the oral compositions (songs) of low-caste drummers and bards, and, like them, they attached themselves to particular kings, or moved from court to court in the hope of reward. The poets themselves were, however, as Hart convincingly argues, literate, and consciously so in their production of syntactically complex poems that deliberately contain some oral formulas. The two most famous of these poets are Kapilar, a Brahmin patronised by a chieftain, and Auvaiyar, a female poet supported by a king.

The *Purananuru*'s anthologist did not adopt a coherent principle of organization, but the editors have provided a useful appendix, showing how the poems are grouped, and their headings provide an indication of general content and breadth of subject matter. These include: poems to or about kings of one of the three great dynasties; groups or cycles by particular poets, often for their patrons (the largest group); ethical and moral poems; kings who are not generous; death, (mostly) the death of kings; war/combat poems; king who rules a poor area — his generosity; the ephemeral nature of life; and drummer poems.

George L. Hart is a justly renowned scholar of South Asian, and especially Tamil literature, and the outstanding scholarship on which this volume is built (the tip of which we see in the excellent notes to nearly every poem) will only reinforce his considerable reputation. Specialists in the academic field will therefore already have gratefully consumed the contents; but what kind of literary experience can the non-specialist expect when browsing this anthology? In his "Poet's Preface," Hank Heifetz, explains that he was responsible for turning Hart's prose translations and supporting material into poems in English, with some added assistance from his own

knowledge of Tamil. From Hart's necessarily short but useful discussion of Tamil meter and alliteration, and from Heifetz's own remarks, it is clear that the principal formal quality that Heifetz has tried to bring over from Tamil to English is "the relendess flow" of a language that "runs like a river." The success, or otherwise, of this strategy can perhaps be gauged by a comparison with a different approach to the same material.

The Association for Asian Studies has already honoured this book with the A. K. Ramanujan Prize for Translation, 2002. Ramanujan, who, in addition to being a brilliant translator and scholar, was a considerable poet in his own right, produced versions of some of these poems himself (see, for instance, *Poems of Love and War*, New York: Columbia UP, 1985). How do Heifetz's versions compare with Ramanujan's?

Heifetz's translations are "foreignising," although not radically so: he attempts to mirror the rolling Tamil line in English, sometimes, as he puts it himself, "straining against the bounds of English syntax" (xii). Ramanujan's translations, by contrast, are "domesticating," in the sense that their prime consideration is to produce something that sounds as though it has been composed for the first time in English, even though its subject matter is derived from the Tamil original. Typographical conventions, and the supporting material, suggest that both types of translation want to be considered as poetry in English, but the effect could not be more different. Ramanujan, precisely because he does not tie himself to the "relendess flow" of the original, produces recognisable and often compelling poems in English, each imbued with a distinctive rhythm and verbal intensity. Heifetz's translations, although clearly reorganisations of Hart's more literal versions (some of the process is charted in the endnotes), never put enough formal distance between themselves and the original to achieve the quality of poems in English, and they could as well be printed as prose. To take an example, Heifetz begins his translation of poem 271:

We used to see garments of nocci flowers, dark bunches grown
on fields which never knew of a lack of water and their colors
worn across the broad and lovely mounds of love of women
with filigreed ornaments would fill one's eyes!

Here, as elsewhere, Heifetz joins a procession of translators who have struggled with the problem of the long line in English prosody (whether attempting to mirror Tamil, Sanskrit or Greek). Ramanujan, allowing the

poet's imperative to overrule the literalism of the scholar, recognises a better way to release the content of these poems into the modern world:

The chaste trees, dark-clustered,
blend with the land that knows
no dryness; the colours on the
leaves mob the eyes.

We've seen those leaves on
jewelled women, on their
mounds of love.

This provides a good example of what Ramanujan himself called "structural mimicry": "to translate relations, not items — not single words but phrases, sequences, sentences; not metrical units but rhythms; not morphology but syntactic patterns" ("On Translating a Tamil Poem" in *The Collected Essays of A. K. Ramanujan* (OUP: India), 1999, 230). Heifetz never approaches this kind of sophistication and hard-earned transparency in his translations. But perhaps few translators do.

In so far as Hart and Heifetz have provided us with the complete anthology, while Ramanujan selected particular poems that may have been especially suited to his poetic agenda, this comparison may be considered unfair. Indeed non-Tamil speaking specialists in Indian religion and culture, or their students, may well prefer the Hart and Heifetz versions, on the assumption that they are getting closer to the originals, or at least seeing all the material. The non-specialist, however, browsing this anthology in the expectation of encountering English poetry — in the way that Arthur Waley's poems from the Chinese or Ramanujan's translations from various South Indian languages are English poetry — may well be disappointed. This is not to say that such readers will not hear voices that evoke recognisably common human experiences from a distant and unfamiliar past; it is simply that those voices will be mostly prosaic, and for that reason, remoter than they might have been.

But even with such a caveat, this handsomely-produced volume is to be welcomed as a major contribution to scholarship, and one can only admire unreservedly the immense knowledge, skill and perseverance which makes an undertaking on this scale possible. Hart and Heifetz have opened a door onto

a seemingly remote but emotionally resonant culture. In a world where access of this kind is unpredictably at risk, we should enter with gratitude. (W.J. JOHNSON, CARDIFF UNIVERSITY)

'GEORGINA DOPICO BLACK. *Perfect Wives, Other Women. Adultery and Inquisition in Early Modern Spain*. Durham: Duke University Press 7001 Pp, xx + 307. Hardcover US \$84.95.

Perfect Wives, Other Women is the study of three Golden Age texts as these concern the "inquiry" into women's bodies and souls by early modern men, from husbands to theologians. In 16th century conduct literature for married women and 17th century wife-murder plays, Dopico Black seeks to demonstrate a shift in modes of perfecting wives from one century to another, and how the one mode stems from the other. Specifically, the author endeavours to show how the wife's body was used as a "transcoder" of and for numerous kinds of cultural anxieties — particularly those of race, gender, religion and interpretation — as a reflection of the shift in modes of perfecting Others' bodies with respect to the nation.

Dopico Black's stated goal is to trace the relationship between the body of the wife (i.e. the married woman as Other) and the cultural Other that the Church sought to eliminate through the sacraments. The Church's concern lay in the danger and possibility of religious recidivism, in the fear that the Other had the ability to resurface and endanger the program of national identity. Starting from Sebastian de Covarrubias's definition of woman as non-virgin, the author hopes to show how women only acquired subjectivity, and subjection, through marriage. She argues that the discursive and the material are inseparable in the body, and that, therefore, there exists a relation between reading and interpreting the body. The need to interpret — and the ultimate illegibility of — the body gives rise to questions of authority and a need to control the body. In the central chapters of the book, Dopico Black seeks to show that a new reading of Fray Luis de León's *La perfecta casada*, Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *El médico de su honra* and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Los empeños de una casa* will demonstrate that these texts are by no means marginal or derivative. They are instead defiant works that, through the body of the wife, challenged Inquisitorial reading practices, for in addition to husbands, the Inquisition had a role to play in reading and controlling bodies, both physical and textual.

In opposition to traditional scholarship, the argument suggests that *La perfecta casada* is not only a conduct book advocating "appropriate" behaviour and desires for women, but a manual for interpretation that responds to the Inquisitorial accusations that kept Fray Luis jailed for five years. Similarly, Dopico Black reads Calderon's *El médico de su honra* as a "scathing indictment" of the honour code and the *limpieza de sangre* statutes, not as a text upholding the dogma of Counter-Reformation Spain. This is one of her most interesting arguments since it contradicts the received view of Calderon's work. On the standard view, Calderon's theatre upheld traditional social and religious morality; as Jose Antonio Maravall puts it, Calderon's work "could not escape the conditions in which it was produced and which [it] reflected" (30). To the contrary, Dopico Black reads conduct literature and honour plays "with and against each other" (13) to show an Inquisitorial hermeneutic in the background of both.

In Chapter One, "Visible signs," Dopico Black argues that "the wife's body served as a kind of transcoder of and for various types of cultural anxieties" (4). The wife is a useful body because in her body the anatomic, religious, social and economic discourses intersect. The difficulty of reading and interpreting the wife's body and, similarly, the textual body, implies the difficulty of knowing either of these. The inability of reading infidelity once the marriage has been consummated, and the difficulty of reading a recidivist of an orthodox physical appearance, together with the feminizing attributes attributed to male Jews, indicate that the discourses of gender and race intersect during this period and why surveillance was necessary in both cases. Since male honour was dependent on female chastity, which could not be determined visibly, any sign could be interpreted as a sign of infidelity, and mere suspicion was grounds for the husband to re-establish his honour. It is here that the relationship between body and text emerges most clearly vis-a-vis reading and knowing, which makes the husband's hermeneutical work problematic. This leads Dopico Black to agree with Howard Bloch's definition of misogynist discourse: reading the text and reading the woman has the objective of appropriating her. Dopico Black also argues that, just as the male subject of early modern Europe sought to define himself, he also defined woman as Other. Interestingly, this argument is the central argument of Mar Martinez-Gongora's recent book *Discursos sobre la mujer en el Humanismo renacentista español* (1999), which explores Fray Luis's *La perfecta casada* in addition to the works of Antonio de Guevara and Alfonso and Juan de Valdes.

Chapter One thus establishes the wife's illegible body as the logical site for the encounter of discourses in 16th and 17th century Spain. This is justified by invoking Covarrubias' broad definition of the word "adulterar," which includes anything that goes "toward the Other," and the all too literal interpretation of biblical injunctions and Tridentine dogma. Together with the transubstantiation/consubstantiation debate of the Counter-Reformation, the period questioned the epistemological implications of meaning, representation and interpretation. A *converso* or a *morisco* shows no visible signs that mark him as different after conversion, which calls into question the sacrament of baptism and the validity of a sign, since, for example, circumcision does not guarantee recidivism. Dopico Black's point here is that, in early modern Spain, there was a desire for a system of reading difference at the same time that the subjectivity of the individual defined itself against the Other. In fact, with the elimination of the Other in 1492 by means of the expulsion of the Jews and the Reconquest of Granada from the Moors, and by the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609, the need for this Otherness led to the status of *limpieza de sangre*. This need for reading leads to what Dopico Black calls Inquisitorial hermeneutics: a misreading of bodies, such as attributing female physiological signs to Jews, or Calderon's Gutierre misreading his wife's body as being polluted by the Other. Purity of blood is therefore the central issue in both cases.

Chapter Two, "Pasos de un peregrine," begins with a brief history of the troubles that Fray Luis's ancestors had with the Inquisition and Fray Luis's similar problems, both of which arose in part due to manners of reading. Dopico Black argues that *La perfecta casada* is an answer to the Inquisitorial accusations brought against Fray Luis and a meditation on interpretation, in addition to being an exegetical text and a conduct manual. To make this argument, Dopico Black draws on the corpus of Fray Luis's work, in particular *De los nombres de Cristo*, to show that it is possible for deliberations about the body of the wife to be reflections about texts. She also contends that the shortcomings of Fray Luis's imperfect wife are those that his own text, also a feminine *body*, displays. His text is therefore as unstable as the wife's body he seeks to define, which becomes the locus where the relationships between being and seeming can best be read and interpreted. It is legibility, or illegibility, that concerns Fray Luis.

According to Dopico Black, *La perfecta casada* is a work that reflects and expounds upon the philological and exegetical issues that Fray Luis was concerned with all his life, and the little critical attention this work has

received, then and now, undermines its position among his corpus. Its importance also lies in its concern with interpretation and translation in an Inquisitorial context. For this reason, Dopico Black views Fray Luis's venture into the realm of conduct manuals as a strategy which allowed him to expound on topics of his interest while providing him with shelter from the Inquisition. She supports her arguments with a detailed analysis of the primary text.

Focusing on Fray Luis's diatribe against make-up, Dopico Black explores the uses of the word *adulterar*, especially in relation to the use of cosmetics to create an Other of the Self. This self-fashioning, not permissible for women because of the deceit it implies, nevertheless allows the husband to be the adulterous one when he loves the made-up Other. On another level, the wife is adulterous when she alters, with cosmetics, God's creation, an ontological deception. Following the Church Fathers, Fray Luis characterizes cosmetic alteration as teleological adultery. According to Dopico Black, Fray Luis's argument against teleological adultery is "plagued by incoherencies" (102), both at the formal level of the text and as an argument. Formally, Fray Luis engages in verbal and rhetorical excesses, excesses for which he admonishes women; he also engages in a self-fashioning that indulges textual borrowing, an excess he both reproves and encourages in the wife. She should self-fashion herself to be a perfect wife, which implies change and the necessity and ability to do so, though Fray Luis censors such activities when they involve the aesthetic. Dopico Black also contends that Fray Luis' reading of the wife's body can also be read as an adulterous act, if reading is equated with penetration. Therefore, *La perfecta casada* is a defiant text in its advocacy of the interpretation and plurality of texts, yet a conservative text in that it seeks to minimize the gap between sign and meaning in an effort to ensure legibility, especially where the wife's body is concerned. Labelling the text's discourse "misogynist" because of its rhetorical excesses and its contradictions, Dopico Black suggests that this text offers "unconscious resistance" to the more repressive norms prescribed for wives in early modern Spain. This last conclusion does not, for this reader, follow from the author's discussion of Fray Luis's work.

In Chapter Three, "The Perfected Wife," Dopico Black takes a look at another wife's body, which is examined and, for a transgression she never committed, punished by her husband in order for the wife to reach perfection in death. Calderon's play *El médico de su honra* is presented as a blatant example of misreading in the honour-vengeance plays of seventeenth-century Spain. Inasmuch as the misreading of the wife's body indicates that a sign does not

always coincide with its referent, the unreliability of a sign is a frightening fact for *Inquisitorial* readers.

El médico de su honra dramatizes Inquisitorial hermeneutics by alluding to the socio-political context in which the play was written and performed. In this context there is a direct relationship between stage honour, dependent on the wife's chastity, and social honour, dependent on *limpieza de sangre*. This relationship has been pointed out by many scholars, but Dopico Black proposes a new analogy, and therefore a new reading of the play. The original analogy posits the husbands' insecurities regarding his wife's sexual honour as a representation of the *cristiano nuevo's* insecurity regarding his impure ancestry, a situation over which neither the husband nor the new Christian, respectively, has control. Dopico Black's analogy conceives of the husband as the overzealous inquisitor who (mis)reads the wife's body. (Mis)reading the wife's body is an efficient way to channel suspicion away from himself: by attacking his wife's Otherness he implicitly states his own orthodoxy. This new analogy leads Dopico Black to recast the question of honour as a question of reading, in which the husband reads, scrutinizes, encloses and textualizes the wife's body.¹ By so doing, he inadvertently underscores the ambiguity of signs, thereby undermining his own legitimacy, i.e., the Inquisitorial enterprise. On this basis, Dopico Black concludes that Calderon was challenging "the rigidity inscribed in codes of reading and mechanisms of judgment that seek to monogamize meaning" (116). She further contends that by exposing the illegitimacy of the reading conventions, Calderón was questioning and criticizing the *limpieza de sangre* statutes and their enforcement, thus exposing the illegitimacy of Inquisitorial power. Dopico Black strongly suggests that Calderon "subverts" the honour code by informing the audience of the unreliability, i.e. the adultery, of signs. By dramatizing the misreading of signs, the play questions absolute readings, such as those made by Inquisitorial authorities. This is Dopico Black's new reading of Calderon's play, and the question readers will have to answer is whether Calderon was fully questioning and/or challenging the dominant ideology of 17th-century Spain (contra Maravall's thesis), when, on her own analogy, Gutierre is an Inquisitor who implicitly states his own orthodoxy.

Chapter Four, "Sor Juana's Empeños," the best written Chapter in the book, seeks to transfer to a Spanish American context the issues of reading

1 It should be noted that, according to Dopico Black, this is but one of sever* the play that is (mis)read.

and legibility as these relate to gender and race. Focusing on Sor Juana's *Los empeños de una casa* (a feminizing of Calderon's *Los empeños de un acaso*), Dopico Black argues that the "displacement... between the wife's body, the status of the sign and the Other's body find striking resonances in Castano's transvestism and in the marriage proposal it elicits" (172). In addition, she supports this argument by showing that challenging gender stability or gender fluidity is part of Sor Juana's view throughout her works, including *Respuesta* and "Romance 48," in which the instability of the gender of the poetic voice is inscribed. Dopico Black proposes that, in the same way that *La perfecta casada* and *El médico de su honra* challenge inquisitorial hermeneutics, the self-imposed illegibility of Sor Juana's body(ies) is a resistance to being read as androgynous, as a man, or, since she is a nun, even as a perfect wife (of Christ). The play, rather than confirming the androgyny of Sor Juana, presents the fluidity of gender as a place in which a woman may find protection. Sor Juana parodies the traditional honour script by presenting gender illegibility as a form of resistance that empowers the body/text to resist being read as a woman — as a wife, given Covarrubias' definition of "woman" as "wife" (which, indeed, is Dopico Black's point of departure in her Preface). Dopico Black contends that, in contrast to *La perfecta casada* and *El médico de su honra*, *Los empeños de una casa* does not wish to perfect the wife's body, but rather "flaunts its seductive imperfections" (205). This comparative study of texts is interesting, but in light of the just-mentioned contrast, Chapter 4 is not the most natural extension of the previous Chapters. In the cases of Fray Luis and Calderón, the wife's body is contained because it is illegible, whereas Sor Juana finds "protection" in gender illegibility.

Dopico Black's well researched book presents a different reading of canonical texts. She carefully presents her arguments in historical context, which, in large part, lends them plausibility. It is a book for the specialist who wishes to read a fresh approach to canonical texts. Her textual analysis is good and she uses primary sources well to further her argument. The principal shortcoming of the book is Dopico Black's writing style, which is a serious impediment to reading. In particular, her extensive use of brackets, parentheses and dashes interferes with the flow and clarity of her prose, and some of the information conveyed in the text might have better served the reader in endnotes.

Dopico Black achieves her objective of showing that the representation of women in the 16th and 17th- century Spanish literature reflects the period's concern with woman's place and behaviour in society as an aspect of the

broader tensions afflicting Spain in the early modern period. She addresses the question of how women acquire subjectivity only minimally, however, though it is clear that she sees the self-fashioning of men as dependent on the views they held of women. The question of interpretation is the most interestingly explored — as it is related to the wife's body, to the religious Other's body, and to the text — because it brings the author to questions of reading. (RAQUEL TRILLIA, UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE)

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"PETER M. DALY. *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. Pp. 283. Paper CDN \$25.95.

First published in 1979, this second edition differs from the first mainly in a "substantially rewritten chapter 1," and an enlarged bibliography (ix). The reason for these particular changes is clear enough; as Daly indicates in the preface, "[m]any of the concerns expressed in the first edition remain valid. Literary scholars still use and misuse emblems as a mere ancillary to interpretation. And many still fail to make the necessary distinction between the emblem as a source and the emblem as a possible parallel for a verbal effect in a literary text" (ix). Thus, while the developing study of emblems proper justifies revisions to the first chapter, which is mainly concerned with defining the form, functions, development, and contextual implications of emblems in English and German criticism of the period, the succeeding four chapters concerning genre studies remain fairly consistent with the edition.

In this very readable book, Daly's uncluttered prose uncluttered agenda: the long first chapter (73 pages) accurately demonstrates the "phenomenal growth in the study of emblems" since 1979. Thus the

discordant lack of wider critical engagement with emblems is emphasized: why do literary scholars continually fail to consider emblems in relation to, or even as, literature? The problem, as Daly presents it, is twofold: first, much of the work he cites is available only in German, which is beyond the purview of the majority of English critics. This book offers a corrective, then, in the sense that Daly reads, translates, and discusses a wide variety of German critical work on emblems and emblem theory. Secondly, there is the problem of anachronistic definition. Again, this book offers a valuable reconsideration of terms, both rhetorically and practically, in a consistent demonstration that emblems are not "arbitrary" or "capricious" in terms of signification; neither are they the "bastard children," or "degenerate forms of allegory" (4). In fact, though Daly admits that the overlap between symbolic, allegorical, and emblematic modes of expression is often confusing, emblems depend on a clearly identifiable form; they are composed of motto (*inscriptio*), picture (*pictura*), and interpretation (*subscriptio*). If only by virtue of including an actual picture as part of the form, emblems are distinguishable from symbolic and allegorical modes of thought and expression.

Furthermore, "a meaningful relationship" between *pictura* and *scriptio* is necessarily required in emblems; the manner of interaction is "connotative rather than denotative" (8). Thus each part of the hybrid form is equivalent in terms of interpretation: neither is privileged (or subordinated) in terms of signifying value. Daly contextualizes this definition by describing the wider cultural influences on emblem books, thereby distinguishing emblems from related forms (such as impresas, Greek epigrams, commemorative medals, and heraldic devices). The thirty page section on the "Forerunners of the Emblem" also includes brief summaries of such larger cultural influences as classical mythology, Egyptian hieroglyphics, medieval nature symbolism and bestiaries, the art of memory tradition, the *Loci Communes* or commonplace books, the *Tabula Cebetis* (a Greek dialogue narrating an allegory of life), and biblical exegesis. While this section is thoroughly invaluable, however, I did register some dismay at the abbreviated treatment given to biblical exegesis. Barely half a page serves to virtually dismiss the "medieval and essentially Catholic" (41) topic, and there is no mention of the four-level model of interpretation. In fact, this "medieval and essentially Catholic" model was taught in schools, preached in pulpits, and informed much of the re-formed English tradition up to the 1640's at least. Nonetheless, such an abridged approach toward biblical exegesis is a relatively minor quibble, since it does not significantly compromise the strengths of Daly's otherwise

comprehensive, perceptive, and often quietly ironic overview of emblems and the scholarly work associated with them.

Chapter 2, "The Word-Emblem," develops the literary application of emblems as a "mode of thought." Here Daly describes "emblematic thinking" as "controlled associative thinking" (107); unlike the poetic symbol, which provides "a focus of feeling and attitude, as well as conceptual meaning" (108), a word-emblem "presents an identification or equation of thing and meaning, vehicle and tenor ... it is simple and frequently univalent in meaning" (111), much like metaphor or simile. This discussion of the word-emblem as a literary device is followed naturally by Chapter 3, "Emblematic Poetry," which considers matters of form (sonnets and pattern poems), allusions (uses of word-emblems), and emblematic structures in English and German poetry. Again, the discussion furthers the understanding of emblems through the examination of similarities as well as differences; for instance, the terms "imagery" and "emblematic" are clearly not equivalent, despite the general overuse of the former in undergraduate essays. An emblem is an associative visual embodiment explicitly described in a poem, whereas imagery is suggested by poetic devices. Throughout this and subsequent chapters on drama and narrative prose, Daly insists that the definitions and forms he discusses are "provisional models ... not to be taken as watertight compartments into which all [literary works] of this kind must be fitted. They are more like crutches to be cast aside when their purpose is served" (141). Nonetheless, such formal discussion certainly does help to "make it easier for the modern reader to approach" emblems and emblematic models in a variety of genres.

Chapter 4, "Emblematic Drama," discusses emblematic references, *arguemntum embkmatimm* (verbal wit-play that uses emblematic associations and forms), maxims or *sententiae* (such as choral commentary), masques and pageants, dumb-shows, characterization, the use of the stage and its properties, and dramatic structure. Within these subheadings, issues of performance are considered alongside textual topics. Chapter 5, "Emblematic Narrative Prose," deals with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as examples of novels. These three examples demonstrate instances of imagery, episode, structure, and ornamentation (frontispieces and illustrations in various editions) that are emblematically significant. Furthermore, this chapter — perhaps because it reaches into the eighteenth century — drives home the historically misleading distinction between an "anachronistic psychological pattern" of "self-

realization" and spiritual pilgrimage, which would not have been regarded as distinct or divergent themes in the early modern period (198).

Considering the foreshortened length of this chapter (only 17 pages, compared to the average of 38 for the other genre-based chapters), however, the reader may wonder why Daly limits his examination of prose to narrative forms — especially given his Conclusion's final paragraph, which mentions "the vast field of ... religious, didactic, social, and political" writing "which draws upon the same emblematic modes, for example, the sermon and the meditation" (207). Indeed, the Conclusion raises the question regarding this omission in an otherwise well-illustrated work on emblems and their wider application to literary fields of study. Certainly Michael Bath's *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture* (New York: Longman, 1994) examines specific emblem books, emblem writers, and the development of emblem theory with more concentration, but Bath does not attempt to examine and apply emblems beyond themselves, strictly speaking. Notwithstanding Daly's omissions regarding religious and political prose such as sermons, pamphlets, and exegesis — which might, perhaps, justify an entirely separate volume — Daly has provided a valuable and much needed resource for students of the emblem and of emblematic modes in literature. The index of names is supplemented by another index of emblem motifs discussed, and the bibliography, however "selected," covers a wide range of English as well as otherwise inaccessible German criticism. Daly addresses, in plain style, the anachronisms of ideological jargon, and compels us to re-evaluate the very nature of definition and definitiveness — if only because it is in the nature of emblems to do so. (LISSA BEAUCHAMP, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY)

"PAUL E. KERRY. *Enlightenment Thought in the Writings of Goethe: A Contribution to the History of Ideas*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture, Rochester: Camden House, 2001. Pp. 243. Hardcover US\$ 65.00.

Paul Kerry's book opens with a heartbreaking dedication that will be difficult for any parent to read past. But read past we must, ultimately to emerge grateful that the author was able to persevere and complete a solid, rewarding study. Aware of the pitfalls inherent in his project, Kerry wisely devotes a substantial portion of its beginning to a working definition of the Enlightenment. The book's great strength is that the parameters of his

subsequent discussion of Goethe remain faithful to his premise. The book's weakness is the narrowness of that same premise.

Though Kerry's discussion of the Enlightenment opens with an expansive and beautifully-written survey of its multi-national variations in design and conception, his analysis eventually attempts to reduce the movement to its quintessence. The central concern of the Enlightenment, Kerry maintains, was to advocate the notion of tolerance. One of the main problems of the book from this point on is that Kerry conflates "Enlightenment" and "Tolerance" and uses them as interchangeable terms. It is through this lens of (enlightenment) tolerance, though an admittedly broad understanding of the term, that Kerry proceeds to examine Goethe's oeuvre, Kerry is quick to point out that no such study can hope to be complete, but argues that his selection of works is representative (14). Indeed, since the "Enlightenment engaged Goethe for most of his life" (14), Kerry's list of works does indeed cover a half century of output. Much of the list is predictable: *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, *West-östlicher Divan*, and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, but occasionally Kerry discusses those that are mentioned less often: Sankt-Rochus-Fest zu Bingen and *Die Geheimnisse*.

Kerry is at his best in his circumspect and carefully-balanced readings of Goethe's works. This is fine scholarship in a clear, well-written, jargon-free presentation for which Camden House rightly has its reputation. But the other side of this circumspectness, evident already in the book's opening discussion of the Enlightenment, is that Kerry takes no risks. My disappointment in the book stems in part from a disagreement with the narrowness of its premise, but it is intensified with the sense that an important opportunity was missed to confront the deeply problematic issues of Goethe and the Enlightenment. Specifically, the absence of any substantial engagement with either *Werther* or *Faust* makes the book an incomplete investigation of its declared topic. Admittedly, Kerry does discuss Goethe's "tolerant" attitude towards suicide in *Werther* (29-31), but this, it seems to me, misses the more significant issue of whether there is room in the Enlightenment for the kind of radicalized individual that *Werther* presents. At stake here would have been Georg Lukacs's reassessment of Goethe's "Sturm und Drang" phase, especially evident in *Werther*, as being a part of the larger Enlightenment project, and not a "Gegenströmung" as so many literary histories would have us believe. The problem with Lukacs's compelling and substantial arguments is that they have been rendered suspect because of their ideological origins and because of the political agenda they served. With the end of the Cold War, now would be the

right time to reassess Lukacs's reassessment, to test whether his very generous interpretation of the Enlightenment holds water. Kerry would have been just the person to engage in this task, not only because of his fortuitous topic, but precisely because of his circumspect and evidently non-partisan approach to scholarship.

Faust of course provides an even more daunting, complex, and problematic piece of evidence. If Goethe engaged most of his life with the Enlightenment — Kerry's premise — then those concerns would be evident in that work which preoccupied his attention for most of his life. But perhaps this would be a book in itself.

Kerry's monograph would surely have been better served with a title which more accurately describes what it investigates: "Tolerance in the Writings of Goethe." As such, it is a solid piece of thematic analysis and one which will certainly be a valuable resource for both graduate students and Goethe scholars for some time to come. (NICHOLAS VAZSONYI, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA)

JANET STARKEY and OKASHA EL DALY, eds. *Desert Travellers: From Herodotus to T.E. Lawrence*. Durham: ASTENE, 2000. Pp. 327 + xxix. US \$39.95.

Desert Travellers is the first in a series of publications from the Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East (ASTENE). Each volume in the series is a collection of conference papers — this one from a 1999 conference in Cambridge. The aim of the association and its series is to examine the history of travelers and travel writing in this region from antiquity to modernity.

I was drawn to *Desert Travellers* for two reasons: first, there has been scant treatment of desert travel and desert travel writing, a persistent phenomenon that certainly warrants more sustained inquiry; second, the volume is framed by Herodotus and T.E. Lawrence, two fascinating desert travelers and writers on whom I had just written a long comparative essay. The volume, unfortunately, disappoints on both grounds. First of all, the title is misleading: very few of the essays are concerned with desert travel *per se*. Of course, every essay makes mention of a desert, but only insofar as these travelers are traveling in the Middle East, where one cannot throw a stone without it landing in a barren patch of sand. Second, the Introduction promises to

address questions such as "Who went to the deserts of the Middle East? Why did they go? What did they find?" And while the essays do name the "who" and the "what" — if only as inventories bereft of organization or analysis — they categorically refuse to take up the matter of "why." And it is of course this "why" that we are after: why have people from civilized and cultivated lands fled to the arid wastelands of the Middle East from time immemorial? What have they sought in a landscape with an uninterrupted horizon? How have they hoped to quench their thirst?

These frustrations are felt most acutely in the cases of Herodotus and T.E. Lawrence. These two are not only the chronological frame for the collection, but also the most prominent and interesting figures of the lot. In "The Zoology of Herodotus and his Greek Descendants," Charles Foster catalogs the zoological observations of the Father of History and traces their influence through the Middle Ages to the medieval bestiaries. And though he betrays a misunderstanding of the assumptions of Greek geography and ethnography, he nevertheless delivers a wonderfully compelling, if somewhat unbelievable, portrait of Herodotus and his method: "He sat up late in bars. One gets the feeling that his ale-house gossip about the places and the people has such authority because he, waking in the morning and picking up his pen, was unable to distinguish between what he had actually seen and what he had been told by the sailor or merchant he had bought a drink for. His was the certainty of a hung-over imagination." The real problem with this essay, however, is that it has nothing to do with the desert or desert travel. And this is a shame, for Herodotus has quite a bit to say about these matters. For instance, he recounts how Cambyses, in order to march his army through the Arabian deserts on his way to conquer Egypt, enlisted the help of the Arabs, who had devised ingenious means of transporting water to these most desolate regions. He also records Cambyses' infamous campaign against Cyrene, in which a massive force of his men were buried alive without trace somewhere in the vast deserts between Egypt and Libya. Others have pursued this matter, including a documentary crew from BBC1 whom I encountered filming in the far-flung oasis of Siwa.

The essay on T.E. Lawrence is another missed opportunity. In "Deraa Revisited," John Rodenbeck of the American University in Cairo examines a controversial episode in Lawrence's life: his capture and rape at the hands of the Turks in the town of Deraa in November 1917. Rodenbeck argues, as others have before him, that the evidence to sustain Lawrence's testimony is insufficient, even contradictory, and so he suggests that the entire episode was

an elaborate fabrication on Lawrence's part. While I do not agree with his assessment of the evidence, Rodenbeck's essay is one of the strongest in the collection. Again, the problem is not so much with the essay itself as it is with its inclusion in this volume. For as with Foster, so with Rodenbeck: his essay has nothing to do with the desert or desert travel apart from circumstance: Deraa is surrounded by deserts. And as with Herodotus, so with Lawrence: there is a wealth of material on Lawrence's relationship to the desert, to the Bedouin, and to other desert travelers and writers before him. Why not an essay on any of those topics?

In short, *Desert Travellers* disappoints precisely because it fails to do what its title suggests. What it does instead is amass a collection of more or less mediocre essays on travel and travel writing in the Middle East in general. We await a book that lives up to this title, which will take seriously the phenomenon of desert travel and desert travel writing. (CHARLES M. STANG, HARVARD UNIVERSITY)

* ELLEN V. NERENBERG. *Prison Terms: Representing Confinement During and After Italian Fascism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001. Pp. xi + 259. Cloth CDN \$48.00.

Ellen Nerenberg has a double agenda in this highly ambitious, wonderfully readable first book. Not only does she aim to re-map a chunk of twentieth-century Italian literature and culture by adopting "space" as an analytic category, but she also sets out to kick away one of the principal roadblocks along that itinerary, namely the notion that a sharp discontinuity separates the Fascist regime from the Republic that took its place in the postwar period. This is no small undertaking, since that discontinuity is something like the Italian equivalent of the Berlin Wall, and toppling it has only become conceivable during the last decade or so. On the basis of evidence hidden more or less in plain view, historians have recently argued that the juridical de-fascistization of Italy took place fully only in the 1970s; they cite, among other things, the long delay in granting the rights outlined in the 1946 Constitution and the continuing validity of the 1926 penal code well after the regime ended. But to argue that the cultural and ideological de-fascistization of Italy was similarly delayed flies in the face of closely held notions about the Resistance, about neo-realism, and about the supposed rupture that divided postwar Italy from the *ventennio*, the twenty years of Fascist rule. Nerenberg is fearless, and

enters the fray armed with the compelling notion of the carceral palimpsest, a layering of one prison analogue onto another. Nerenberg is interested in, and documents, both material and cultural palimpsests. Hence, she argues, just as pre-Unification convents and monasteries were deeded over to post-Unification Italy and transformed into prisons, so do various kinds of carceral analogues, layered one upon the other, produce an essential ideological continuity. At the same, the prison as palimpsest also serves as camouflage, in which one, presumably benign, layer may cover over the truth of another, more clearly carceral one. The prison is the model for such a structure of confinement, but hers is a study not of literal prisons, rather of their spatial and ideological analogues: the barracks, the convent (and its ideological sister, the women's boardinghouse), the brothel, and the home. These sites serve as the organizational principle for each of the four main chapters of the book, and allow Nerenberg to analyze works as different as Buzzati's *Il deserto dei Tartari* and Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio*, Pratolini's *Cronache di poveri amanti* and de Cespedes' *Nessuno torna indietro*, Piovene's *Lettere di una novizia* and de Cespedes' *Dalla parte di lei*. At the same time, she frames each chapter with fascinating details from architectural history, urban planning, and cultural geography that shore up the analogies between discursive formations, architectural structures of confinement, and literary representations of those structures.

A product of the "spatial turn" in literary and cultural studies, Nerenberg's strategy turns out to be an especially felicitous one. Through a combination of adept textual analysis, sharp theoretical formulations, and examination of socio-historical context, Nerenberg shows how structures of confinement, both material and discursive, contained and constrained gendered subjects during and after the Fascist regime. Her reading strategy is often in the mode of allegory; hence, she reads Buzzati's *Il deserto dei Tartari* as an allegorical critique of fascist codes of masculinity, and de Cespedes' *Nessuno torna indietro* as an allegory of the condition of women under fascism, in which the female characters' movements within and without the space of the convent-turned-boardinghouse allegorize their resistance (or consent). Especially successful is the chapter on the brothel, read not as an architectural space but rather as a space created through social and sexual practices, and as the site where, in the work of Pratolini, the supposed rupture created by neorealism comes undone. Nerenberg analyzes the brothel as the place where opposing ideologies converge and where, in Pratolini's "chronicles," the conflict between fascists and anti-fascists recalls, and appears as a recurrence of, the Florentine conflict chronicled centuries earlier by Dino Compagni.

The timelessness of prostitution, that oldest profession in the world, thus helps Pratolini to figure recent history as a timeless conflict.

Somewhat less successful, at least from the point of view of the originality of her own project, is the final chapter, "House Arrest," in which she takes "home" as her site and Gadda as her principal example. Nerenburg shows how continuity manifests itself in the persistence of nineteenth-century, Lombrosian notions about women and criminality in Gadda's work. And the opening of the chapter, with its examination of the similarity between architectural styles of prisons and those of apartment complexes in the work of Mario Ridolfi, whets one's appetite for more discussion of techniques of surveillance and the continuity of state apparatuses. But once the reading of Gadda is underway, attention to the way space contains and constrains gives way to the more familiar terms of Freud's uncanny, creating a gap between the question posed by the theoretical framework and the reading strategy adopted. This is not to say that Nerenberg's reading of the dystopian aspects of home is not compelling, but rather to remark that her readings elsewhere in the book are guided more closely by the originality of the questions she poses to the texts, and hence tend rather to be less familiar or predictable. Such a gap appears at moments elsewhere in the book as when, in the chapter on the barracks, a mode of reading that relies upon "vulgar" Freudian symbolism produces a (too predictable) interpretation of flaccid flags that contrasts with the sophistication of her discussion of the fascist articulation of barracks, borders, and masculinity. Several inaccuracies are troublesome; Lombroso called his science "anthropometry," rather than "andropometry" (173), and the Italian word "casa" is incorrectly called a phoneme (139). These are small lapses, however, for Nerenberg on the whole is an astute, witty, and downright daring reader who is not afraid to go out on limbs and who mostly doesn't come tumbling down. On the contrary, Nerenberg moves nimbly among a wide range of theoretical models throughout the book, and has produced an original synthesis of feminist theory, cultural geography, and literary and social history. (BARBARA SPACKMAN, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY)

*ROTHBERG, MICHAEL. *Traumatic Realism. The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Pp. 313. Paper US \$22.50; cloth US \$67.50.

Rothberg's study on the problem of textual and other media representations of the Holocaust aims at establishing a dialogue between Holocaust studies and cultural studies. The Nazi genocide is aptly characterized an "interdisciplinary project" that is best approached through interdisciplinary means (3). The texts under discussion in this ambitious book come from a variety of disciplines and genres: social studies, autobiography, satire, fiction, film, and comic strip, e.g. Spiegelman's *Maus*. The latter text, notably the sketch "Saying Goodbye to Mouse," is central to Rothberg's study. It is introduced as paradigmatic for his critical approach based on the distinction between three levels of representation present in the image: the realistic drawing code, the stylization, and the mass-cultural icon. These three modes of representation, Rothberg suggests, are characteristic of phases and trends in Holocaust studies and literature. Most important is the differentiation between realism which emphasizes the ordinarieness of the Shoah. Rothberg finds it encapsulated in Hannah Arendt's notion of the "banality of evil," which, as he maintains, is dominant in the academic discourse—Browning, Baumann, Goldhagen. The antirealist approach, on the other hand, prevails in most of the popular representations of Nazism and the Nazis.

Rothberg opens his discussion with an examination of Adorno's *chronotope* "After Auschwitz" and provides a reading of the much belabored statement according to which writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. In his reading Rothberg places Adorno's phrase in its historical and intellectual context by considering the predicament of a Jewish exile returning to Germany from the United States. Furthermore, the phrase, a reaction to Benjamin's observations on cultural production and barbarism, is followed through Adorno's later writings and his debates with other authors. Rothberg illustrates that Adorno assigned Auschwitz a critical position in history as the "final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism" (35) and configured the Nazis as the "agents of the qualitative transformation whereby history reached a new spatialized stage" (51). Carefully probing into the reassessment of Enlightenment tradition undertaken by Adorno, his critics, and his successors Rothberg concludes that Adorno provided the theoretical impetus for new realist and postmodernist forms of representation" (58). Positing Blanchot and de Man as counterpoints to Adorno, Rothberg examines the nationalist and

anti-Semitic tendencies in their earlier writings (works which he, contrary to other critics takes seriously) under the auspices of "Before Auschwitz, From Now On" and reveals a continuity of certain basic structures in their works. He reveals, for example, the intellectual limitations of Blanchot's claim that the Holocaust represents an absolute from which it is impossible to develop further discourse. This position would exclude the possibility of new forms of representation able to express the trauma. At the same time it *de facto* counteracts Blanchot's insistence on factuality. Ultimately Rothberg considers Adorno and Blanchot "with their "critical discourses of pedagogy and witness" as participants in the public sphere who resisted becoming participants of the technology driven mass-culture, where, as he apodictically proclaims, "contemporary meanings are made" (96).

Turning to a different genre in the chapter "Realism in the 'Concentrationary Universe,'" Rothberg formulates the concept of *traumatic realism* as a mode of expression that mediates between or synthesizes traditional realist and anti-realist expression. His primary examples are Ruth Kluger's *weiter leben* (translated as *Still Alive*) and Charlotte Delbo's autobiographical writings, particularly *Aucun de nous reviendra*. He reveals that while forms of realism are preserved in these texts they also include self-reflection, criticism, and in Kluger's case responses to cutting edge scholarship in literary and Holocaust studies. Situated at the boundaries between historiography (Rothberg aptly makes reference to White and LaCapra), autobiography, and criticism, Kluger and Delbo's works call for multileveled readings. Rothberg draws on his earlier analysis of "mouse, Maus, and Mickey Mouse" to elucidate the effects and function textual strategies such as interrupting the autobiographical account with critical commentary on representation. Through such strategies, he maintains, different versions of traumatic realism are created, Delbo and Kluger serve as examples of authors who succeeded in moving beyond the realist/antirealist "deadlock" in the Holocaust discourse.

Rothberg's analysis of the everpresence of the Holocaust in the American, and, as he maintains, contemporary global media culture, in the chapter "Postmodernism, or 'The Year of the Holocaust'" is based on Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and a segment of *Nightline* devoted to remembering the Holocaust. He believes that the contemporaneity of the Holocaust is caused by the collapse of historical events into the present as well as by the awareness of its potential repetition in other genocidal wars. The libidinal attraction, evinced by the fascination with Nazi culture and images, and the

obsession with trauma are discussed as particularly troubling aspects of the consumption of Holocaust images by the mainstream public(s). As media events like Spielberg's film, *Nightline*, and the numerous other productions and performances change the way the public thinks about historical events. They salvage, as Rothberg asserts, "an Americanized modernity over against the ruins of Europe" (186) which he considers highly problematic.

Rothberg applies the insight that there is something pornographic about — the seemingly unavoidable — making of images and commodities out of the Holocaust primarily to members of the postmemory generations in "Reading Jewish. Philip Roth, Art Spiegelman, and Holocaust Postmemory." However, he fails to mention that this insight informed already writings of the survivor generations, including the novels by Edgar Hilsenrath, Jakov Lind, Jerzy Kosinski, and Albert Drach. Their literary works were and continue to be marginalized because of the predilection for obscene and starkly grotesque elements and diction in the context of the Holocaust. These older, mostly European Jewish authors already practiced the "desacrilizing of the Holocaust" as Rothberg calls it (192), in opposition to the sanctimonious attitudes that prevailed in the suddenly (and mysteriously) reformed post-Shoah societies. Exploring some earlier and postmemory non-American texts in conjunction with the American "postmemory" works foregrounded by Rothberg would likely undermine the rather clean separation texts and phases of writing the study at hand tries to establish. However, by expanding the critical terrain constructed by a careful selection of appropriate texts, Rothberg could have provided a more challenging conclusion to his rich, informative, and stimulating book. A culturally diverse selection and closer consideration of additional genres would undoubtedly have led to the expansion of the Spiegelman-model, which is established at the outset and which gradually turns into a Procrustes bed for a vast variety of texts and theories. This becomes nowhere more obvious in "After the 'Final Solution.'" Having moved from theories articulated by primarily European scholars, Rothberg's discussion proceeds (almost ideologically) to the American sphere where one finds the penultimate text that dialectically links the theoretical parts of his project. Rothberg tries to convince his readers of the exemplary character of Grace Paley's story, "Three Days and a Question," combines "the modernist ethical imperative to reconceptualize culture 'after Auschwitz,' and the postmodern acknowledgment that culture, Eke barbarism, is continuously being transformed by the techniques and technologies that contributed to 'The Year of the Holocaust'" (272). Aside from the fact that the choice of the text seems

arbitrary in view of the wealth of material supporting Rothberg's other claims, its very isolation makes it stand out as something like an exception rather than the beginning of a new era of narratives.

Generally speaking, Rothberg includes references to an impressive range of texts and theories in his critical discussion of representations of the Holocaust and the evolution of conceptual and aesthetic models. Yet, underlying the entire work is an increasingly apparent US-American cultural bias that informs the selection of the texts and genres as well as the very structure of the study and the critical preferences expressed in it. Rothberg's discussion is framed by a relatively simple thesis that opens and concludes the text. For it to work the rather predictably pattern calls for the exclusion of potentially more adventurous writings apt to disrupt the flow of the progressive argument. Thus there is no mention of discursive and performative practices that might elude the binary realist/antirealist opposition, and whose inherent expression would resist the traditional dialectic model that informs the concept of traumatic realism. (DAGMAR C. G. LORERNZ, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO)

*ZVI GITELMAN, ed. *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. Pp. viii + 332. Cloth US \$37.95.

Most historians of the Holocaust, both in Israel and in the United States, when referring to the destruction of Eastern European Jewry have in mind the murder of three million Polish Jews. Almost incidentally, they exclude the two million Soviet-Jewish victims of Nazi genocide both as a source of comparison with the Polish-Jewish experience of the war and as an important methodological corrective to the prevalent paradigm of internment, deportation and extermination; two hundred thousand Soviet Jews died in combat and at least as many lost their lives in the brutal local struggle between National Socialism and Soviet Communism that took place on the reconquered borderlands of Stalin's empire. In marginalizing both the way in which Soviet Jews died and also the particular impact of the war on Soviet-Jewish lives, Western historians recapitulate (often unintentionally) the pointed exclusion of the Holocaust from Soviet historiography, which subsumed the slaughter of Soviet Jews within the epic history of the Great Fatherland War. In post-communist Eastern Europe, patriotic histories of various successor states continue to avoid open discussion of the issues surrounding the fate of

their Jewish populations in the war. The stubborn association of Jews with the imposition of communist rule as well as the disturbing legacy of collaboration has served only to make the silence louder. Thanks to a small number of recent monographs (The pioneering work by Jan Gross, *Evolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*, published by Princeton University Press in 1988 as well as Amir Weiner's *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution*, also published by Princeton in 2001) we know much more than we used to about the Holocaust in the USSR but the lack of balance persists. More strikingly, genocide specialists, on the whole acutely self-conscious about the ideological reverberations of their subject matter, have not explicitly confronted the political roots of this critical absence in the literature. Expertly edited by Zvi Gitelman, *fitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, combines documentary studies of the period with more reflective contemporary essays in order to chart a new research agenda and, at the same time, to ask some hard questions about why the topic has not so far received the attention it deserves. Gitelman, an expert on Jewish nationality and ethnic politics in the Soviet Union and the author of a path-breaking study on the Jewish section of the CPSU, opens the collection with a sweeping introduction to Jewish life under tsars and Soviets. His diachronic survey of the Russian-Jewish *longue durée*—anticipated by his own *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*, republished in 2001 by Indiana University Press—positions the collection squarely within the field of Jewish history rather than in the history of the Holocaust. This perspective makes it difficult to appreciate the highly specific character of the articles which follow; Gitelman's contributing authors are firmly ensconced in the historical and historiographical particulars of the war and its aftermath. The twin legacies of Russian-anti-semitism and Russian-Jewish politics—the core of Gitelman's opening chapter—find no echo in the rest of the collection. The reader might have been better served by a synchronic presentation of the eastern front during and after the war, which would not only provide an immediate sense of geographic and chronological context, but implicitly underscore the *raison d'être* of the collection.

In the second piece, Gitelman takes off his editor's hat to tackle his central theme directly. In his excellent piece on "Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union," he wisely rejects the argument that attributes Soviet unwillingness to treat the Holocaust as a

"unique and separate phenomenon" (18) to a conspiracy of silence, rooted in Soviet anti-semitism. Gitelman associates the Soviet sin of omission with the demand for ideological consistency. In a striking formulation which cuts to the heart of the epistemological crisis that the Shoah poses for Western liberalism, Gitelman asserts that for loyal Soviets—Jews and non-Jews alike—who understood the war as a life-and-death struggle between fascism and communism the Holocaust was "no mystery." Gitelman shows that the willingness of individuals to grapple with Jewish fate as a distinctive aspect of the Soviet experience of WWII became attached to a public posture of resistance against the rigors of Soviet dogma. This sense of identification with Jewish victims, adopted most often by members of the dissident intelligentsia rather than by Soviet-Jewish survivors or by Soviet-Jewish veterans, found particular expression in Evgenii Yevtushenko's poem about the mass shootings at Babii yar and in the ensuing controversy over the proper way to memorialize the Jews murdered there. Even as Soviet intellectuals emphasized the meaningful silence of Soviet authorities, no general pattern of exclusion determined how the vast number of contemporary histories treated the Jewish participants in the Soviet struggle against Nazism. Rather, vagaries of authorial interest and inclination continued to determine whether Jews would be remembered at all and, if so, whether they would be counted primarily among the victimized many or among the heroic few.

In general, the Soviet pattern of "universalizing" the Holocaust presents a marked contrast to the prevailing Western tendency to elevate the destruction of European Jewry to the status of an ahistorical absolute. Gitelman argues with great sensitivity and rhetorical force that the Soviet paradigm, *pace* Yevtushenko and others, is neither a particularly obnoxious manifestation of anti-semitism nor the result of an active denial of history but a legitimate attempt to contextualize Soviet-Jewish losses within an imperial whole. For Western European Jewry and for Americans especially, the slaughter of Jewish civilians in the Holocaust is indeed "unique"; for the citizens of the USSR, the particular Jewish tragedy served to underscore their own immeasurable losses. It is striking, in this context, that the turn toward Holocaust history in the 1980s to which Gitelman devotes due space, did not serve the reclamation of Jewish memories on the part of Soviet-Jewish veterans and survivors but rather the quest for identity on the part of a postwar generation of Soviet Jews. For the former, official memory of the war corresponded with private memories; to the extent that this was the case, the war-time process of Jewish socialization into the family of Soviet nations

could be said to have been a success. For the disillusioned children and grandchildren of the first cohort of Soviet Jews to be schooled in socialist values by the war, the legacy of economic stagnation and de-stalinization left in its wake a need to revisit and revise the past. At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the palpable loss of a unifying mythology of the Great Patriotic War; for the first time, histories of the Holocaust emerged as contested objects of newly minted national pasts. Here, Gitelman ends on a characteristically ambivalent note; his conclusion registers the turn toward the localization of Holocaust historiography in post-Soviet Eastern Europe as both a gain and a loss. On the one hand, increasing emphasis on moral and political reckoning puts the subject on the map in a way all but impossible under the Soviets. On the other hand, the increasing polarization of memory just as often leads in the other direction, toward the active distortion and suppression of history that transforms Soviet sins of omission into nationalist sins of commission.

The remainder of the articles in the volume offer more detailed treatments of the themes brought out in Gitelman's opening piece: 1) the need for better-informed and more nuanced accounts of Jewish genocide in Soviet territory, focused particularly on the question of collaboration and the perception of Jews as Bolsheviks (Spector, Koval, Redlich, MacQueen, Altschuler's "Antisemitism in Ukraine," Litvak, and Romanovsky); 2) the politics behind Soviet historians' treatment of the Holocaust (Altschuler's "Jewish Warfare," and Cholawski); 3) post-Soviet revisions of Holocaust history in Eastern European successor states (Wilhelm, Shner-Neshamit, Ycikas). The collection includes an appendix of documentary sources, some previously published in other places but translated here for the first time. These, unfortunately, are less useful than the articles since they lack any kind of introduction or analysis, not to mention an explanation of the reasons why these particular sources were chosen out of the enormous number of available texts, both published and unpublished.

Bitter Legacy provides an important introduction to the study of a complicated and controversial subject but one of the weaknesses of the book is that most of the articles, while mired in detail, are short on analysis. Without more conceptualization and integration of sources, a true appreciation of this kind of archeological work remains beyond the ken of most non-specialists and demonstrates the extent to which the study of the Holocaust in the USSR is still in its infancy. Most problematically, no one among the contributors addresses the central question raised obliquely in

Gitelman's piece, namely whether the Western-style Holocaust paradigm successfully accounts for the varieties of Soviet-Jewish experience in WWII and for the critical disparities not only between west and east but between east and east. We are left to wonder whether it is simply a matter of writing Soviet Jews into the history of the Holocaust or if there is a more profound methodological issue at stake. The Soviet experience of the war — both Jewish and non-Jewish — was distinctive not least because it was Soviet; this fact does not square neatly with the prevailing tendency among Holocaust historians to stress the particularity of Jewish victimization at the hands of the Nazis. In fact, given the current historiographical split, the so-called "war against the Jews" and the Great Fatherland War might as well have been fought on different planets; this epistemological breach did not develop because the Soviet-Jewish past was willfully suppressed by anti-semitic party apparatchiks but because the claims of Soviet uniqueness competed (with a remarkable degree of success) against parallel claims of Jewish uniqueness. Gitelman's path-breaking collection leads to the striking conclusion that the unwritten history of Soviet Jews in the war is not a consequence of willful forgetting but a troubling trace of a surfeit of memory. (OLGA LITVAK, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY)

"ANTHERE NZABATSINDA. *Nomes linguistiques et écriture africaine chez Ousmane Sembène*. Toronto: Editions du Gref, 1998. CDN \$32.00.

The study of the Africanisation of writing in French has a long and distinguished tradition, perhaps reaching its most refined expression in Jean-Claude Blachère's excellent work, *Négritures* (1993). In relation to the work of Ousmane Sembène, the most comprehensive analysis of his language and style has long been Alioune Tine's monumental thesis (Université Lyon 2, 1981), as well as his numerous articles on the subject. An there Nzabatsinda's book *Normes linguistiques et écriture africaine chez Ousmane Sembène* is a very welcome addition to this debate, extending the analysis of Sembene's work to include the author's then latest publication, *Niiwam/ Taaw* (1987)—his most recent novel, *Guelwaar* (1996), was published after the completion of Nzabatsinda's text. Curiously, in his quite exhaustive bibliography, Nzabatsinda does not refer to Tine's thesis—although he does refer to one of his articles—which leads one to assume that he has not read it. This is a pity as it would have added to the many strengths of this volume if Nzabatsinda had been able to

engage in a sustained dialogue with Tine, assessing his analysis of Sembene's work and the alterations that might be made to this reading in light of developments in African fiction and criticism over the past two decades. The other slightly curious element about the book is its somewhat misleading tide, for almost half of the book is, in fact, devoted to an analysis of what Nzabatsinda terms "romans de transition" — i.e. works published in the late 1960s — and "romans modernes" —works of the 1970s and 1980s —, which are deemed to have developed much further than Sembene the process of Africanisation of French. It is only at the end of his study that Nzabatsinda devotes a chapter to exploring the differences between Sembène's work and that of these later generations. This exploration of the evolution of African writing over a thirty-year period is to my mind the most interesting aspect of the book and, its significance to the structure of the text as a whole surely should have led this comparative dimension to be highlighted in the tide (perhaps an editorial decision decided otherwise?). This comparative dimension might also have been more profitably incorporated into the structure of the text with less space devoted to the analysis of Sembene's texts — already closely analysed by Tine amongst others —, and more emphasis placed on the general Africanisation of writing in French over the past four decades. These general remarks about the overall structure of the book are not designed to undermine the undeniable strength of Nzabatsinda's analysis but rather to situate more clearly the real intellectual structure underpinning the volume, which is veiled by its misleading tide. Turning more closely to Nzabatsinda reading of Sembene's work, what then are his main arguments? Essentially, he presents a formal, linguistic and aesthetic analysis of Sembene's writing, focusing on three main features: Sembene's desire to create a "démocratisation de la langue," his representation of a "diglossie plurielle and his awareness of, and attempts to reach, "un public destinataire double." Nzabatsinda provides a very convincing analysis of each of these elements. As a largely self-educated writer, Sembene stands out from those members of the African intellectual elite who formed the majority of his contemporaries — Léopold Sédar Senghor, Cheikh Hamidou Kane —, and from the beginning of his literary career, his writing has always deviated from "standard French." This process was developed in his later works with Sembene opening his narratives to include dialogue featuring characters who are non-native French speakers, or who do not speak French at all. His texts thus seek reflect the

plurilingual nature of his society while also recognising that his books will be read by both Senegalese/African and non-African readers.

Nzabatsinda's analysis of Sembene's texts is intelligent and persuasive. However, it is his general conclusions/assumptions about Sembene's work that I sometimes find slightly schematic. For instance, his introductory statement to the effect that Sembene's themes "se situent entre la tradition et la modernité" (xii) scarcely does justice to the complexity and the openly socialist imperatives of the author's work. Equally, the notion that Sembene's style of writing is "representatif de la production noire africaine" (xxii), which underpins the comparison of Sembene's work with that of younger generations of writers, seems rather sweeping when one thinks of the differences in style between Sembene and other writers of his generation—e.g. the dense "philosophical" style of Chiekh Hamidou Kane or the exuberant comedy of Mongo Beti.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to find fault with Nzabatsinda's basic thesis that the writing of authors such as Malick Fall, Yambo Ouologuem, Ahmadou Kourouma, V.Y. Mudimbe, Tchicaya U'Tamsi and Sony Labou Tansi—the six authors examined alongside Sembene — has developed the polyphonic nature of African storytelling, employing multiple narrative voices, and often using untranslated words and sentences from a variety of African languages in their texts. In the work of the latter three authors — misleadingly termed "modernes," as though Sembene was somehow traditionalist—, this process is deeply pronounced and Nzabatsinda describes their narratives as motivated primarily by a desire for "fabulation" and "derision." In these texts, nothing makes any sense and the reader is presented with a world full of contradictions. These novels present individuals at sea in a confusing landscape, which provides a sharp contrast with the often ideologically motivated characterisation found in Sembene's writing, where characters often represent their class/social group.

Anthere Nzabatsinda's book is thus an important study of the work of one of Africa's greatest authors and the relationship of his work to that of later generations of African authors. However, it would have added to the overall strength of his book if he had developed his analysis of the social and political processes underlying this shift in narrative form. This divorce of the texts studied from the social, political and cultural contexts that have helped to produce them is a result of an insistence on the linguistic or purely literary study of literature, which is common in Francophone literary departments. While I would agree that Anglophone scholars could sometimes benefit from

some "Francophone rigour" in their methodology — the danger of mere "thematic analysis" is a recurrent problem —, I firmly believe that one cannot simply divorce the literary text from the "real world." The complex arguments on literature, politics and history, which has marked the, predominantly Anglophone, postcolonial debate over the past decade, has yet to find much of an echo in the Francophone world where Genette-style textual analysis still holds sway. Surely, it is time for a genuine dialogue to begin between Francophone and Anglophone scholars so that the best of both traditions can be combined. Anthere Nzabatsinda's text is one that would surely have benefited from such a process. (DAVID MURPHY, UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING)

JOHN HARTSOCK. *A History of American literary journalism: The Emergent of a Modern Narrative Form*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000 Pp. 294. Paper US \$22.95; cloth US \$50.00.

In the opening pages of *A History of American Literary Journalism*, John Hartsock takes his reader on a tour through the various labels associated with literary journalism (narrative nonfiction, literature of fact, reportage, new journalism) and settles on the definition that he will track and discuss in the six successive chapters of his book. The term "narrative literary journalism," he explains, refers to a descriptive form of coverage that features social or "true-life" portraiture and that reads "like a novel or short story" (22). Hartsock's purpose or quest, though, is to accomplish more than a definition and history of the form or genre; it is a search-and-rescue mission, an extended commemoration of what he calls "a consistent voice for challenging taken-for-granted assumptions" (14). The voice of narrative literary journalism, he insists, shares similarities not with objective reporting or yellow journalism but with literature. Like great literature, it is "about... empathic understanding" and not about the "cryptotheological hold of factual journalism" (143, 62). According to Hartsock, narrative literary journalism is a genre both "marginalized" and ignored by the world of literary scholarship—a genre that is, as he puts it, "lost in the critical forest because of the elitist politics of the traditional literature academy" (30-31). To insure that his mission into this forbidden forest is worthwhile, even laudable, Hartsock adamantly depicts the object of the quest as almost unparalleled in value. Thus, he argues that narrative literary journalism surpasses other kinds of journalism in its ability

not only to illuminate and instruct but also to reach across the "gulf between subjectivity and an objectified world" (69). For Hartsock, the form effects a irrefutable connection "with the Other [which moves] beyond ideological prescriptions" (69). Its practitioners, moreover, are noble fellows who provide "profound insight into the human condition" (134). Insistently returning to these notions throughout his study, Hartsock urges his reader to acknowledge that literary journalism is as clever as canonical literature, that its writers are the unsung heroes of an entire realm of insight and empathy. Near the end of his first chapter, he claims (with more than a hint of snarkiness indicated by his quotation marks): "[T]here is little difference between the professionalized class of journalists and the way creative writing workshops today professionalize 'creative' writers, some of whom teach in our most esteemed universities and are considered makers of 'literature.' The only difference is that they are privileged while journalists are marginalized" (32). Hartsock seizes on the issue of "marginalization," lamenting the exclusion of a class of white and predominantly male writers from a canon he situates at a carefully guarded center of American literature. In Hartsock's assessment, elite English departments in the U.S. implicitly "demonize" journalism as "the Other, or the brute" (222).

As a literary scholar, I find Hartsock's indignant pounding at the gates of literary status to be intriguing. On the one hand, he seems remarkably unaware of the not-so-recent shift in English departments toward viewing literature in terms of social reportage or cultural engagement rather than confirmation of timeless verities. "It has only been with the rise of the elitist literary academy," he boldly asserts, "that the 'novel' has been press-ganged into a kind of essentialized literary servitude" (50). On the other hand, Hartsock is right to state that journalism is still viewed as an "inferior form" (30), particularly when he points out that major literary anthologies do not generally include writings by narrative literary journalists — and if they do include them, they fail to emphasize the significance of their original publication in newspapers or magazines. (A quick look through my 1999 *Heath Anthology of American Literature* verifies his statement, as does the recently published *Popular American Literature of the 19th Century*, which by its very existence seems to convey the need for a separate anthology of "popular" publications). Discussing the 1986 *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Hartsock notes that the section on the *Federalist* papers represents them as literary essays and not as the newspaper items of their first appearance. Of the twenty-four authors in this *Norton*, he explains, "the texts of at least twelve

could qualify, in whole or in part, as an early form of a narrative literary journalism" (207). Assertions like these raise interesting questions about canons, authorship and marketing, questions that English departments have continually addressed since 1986.

Although his chapter on "Critical Marginalization" offers learned observations about literary value and the rise of New Criticism, Hartsock veers into overstatement when he describes the already outmoded New Critics as "totalitarian ... conservators of the ancien régime" (244). Interestingly, Hartsock's own project involves "establishing the pedigree of narrative literary journalism among the different narrative modes" (132). By aiming to elevate the position of narrative literary journalism, he covets the elitism that he wants to interrogate. Instead of highlighting the issues surrounding the readership reached by the popular press — Who purchased the different newspapers in the nineteenth century? What kinds of advertising strategies were employed? What political conditions influenced editorials and reporting? — he focuses on the goal of winning over a particular academic audience. Thus, Hartsock devotes considerable attention to some of the big names in American literature, tracing their publishing track-records to newspapers and magazines. Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron-Mills*, he reminds us, first appeared in the *Atlantic* in 1861, and Henry David Thoreau's Cape Cod sketches were originally published in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in 1855. Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, and Mark Twain all practiced the form of narrative literary journalism, and, combining the techniques of novelists and reporters, they developed the tenets of naturalism and realism.

The literary journalists' own sense of the value of their work is very interesting, and Hartsock quotes several instances of their aspirations to be known as "poet reporters" and "higher journalists" in turn-of-the-century articles and reviews (33). Yet, he leaves open the extent to which anxieties about the newspapers' prestige, circulation, or professional rivalries underpin these efforts at self promotion. He establishes instead the "literary possibilities" of the writing, the ways in which journalists "utilized novelistic techniques" (33, 41). And, while these particular points are clear, others are strangely inflated. In Hartsock's estimation, for example, the journalists' "narrative ambition is daunting, even terrifying, [and] has made the historical enterprise in narrative literary journalism all the more existentially courageous in the face of essentializing critical cryptotheologies" (51).

In a chapter titled "What Preceded: The Origins of Modern American Literary Journalism," Hartsock reaches back to include Plato and Pliny the

Elder in his pantheon of journalism's predecessors. His sweeping discussion covers the rise of the printing press, the shift from oral to printed ballads, the circulation of early modern pamphlets, eighteenth-century documentary literature and biographies, and the rise of positivism. Throughout this overview, Hartsock makes provocative comparisons between texts that are widely separated by time and scholarly definition. He argues, for instance, that *In Cold Blood* (1965) resembles pamphlets describing murders from the 1590s, and that Samuel Pepys's eyewitness report of the Great Fire (1666) may be viewed as a forerunner to John Hersey's account of nuclear war in *Hiroshima* (1946). Scenes of carnage described in a sixteenth-century epic, Hartsock contends, share similarities with nineteenth-century sensational reporting. The collapsing categories make for interesting shifts in perspective, as various forms of "high" literature, when viewed in terms of documentation and reportage, transfigure into prototypes of narrative literary journalism.

The main difficulty of this chapter lies with its extensive subject matter, with the complexities and textual intricacies that become flattened by such a broad overview. Although Hartsock makes meaningful points about the different forms of narrative nonfiction throughout the centuries, he might have turned the chapter's lens on American literary and journalistic history. Why go back to Plato when America's publishing history is so complex and interesting? Several pages are devoted to William Kemp and Daniel Defoe, but no mention is made of Benjamin Franklin. Furthermore, the only American genres mentioned as predecessors to narrative literary journalism are captivity narratives and travelogues; Hartsock remains silent on the relevance of abolitionist literature and political pamphlets to his discussion. If, as Hartsock repeatedly (and repetitively) claims, narrative literary journalists make room for a "gorgeously affirmed subjectivity" and appeal to "social action" (70,79), then aren't texts like slave narratives and abolitionist tracts vital to the genre's origins? Hartsock includes one grisly excerpt from Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) describing the agony of a caged slave, and his only observation is that "it is as compelling as any in narrative literary journalism" (121).

The "compelling" nature of the account, moreover, verges on sensationalism, a mode Hartsock wishes to distance from narrative literary journalism. In effect, the rescue motif of Hartsock's study precludes him from exploring how and why the sensational and the narrative modes overlap in terms of popularity and ideology. He makes a rather awkward acknowledgment, though, of the possibility of their affiliation: "What the two

share in common is that both appeal to the common sense-appeal of our shared common senses in the linguistic attempt to reflect the phenomenal world" (100). Sensational journalism may bear a certain resemblance to narrative literary journalism, but, according to Hartsock, it also "soils [the] aesthetic ambitions" of literary journalism and fails to "overcome the epistemological gulf between one's subjectivity and what has been objectified as Other" (135). In other words, where muckrakers and sensationalists tend to be outraged and patronizing, literary journalists tend to be empathetic. While this proposition is clear, Hartsock's examples do not support it. For instance, discussing Stephen Crane's rendition of "the strangely satanic smiles" of a group of miners, Hartsock writes: "Alone, 'satanic smiles' clearly would be sensationalizing. But those smiles were mitigated earlier when they were offered as friendly gestures__ The result is a fundamental humanness despite what could have been characterized as Other. If the miners are indeed satanic, they are more on the order of Milton's terribly human Satan" (148). It seems that Hartsock is overselling the point here and adding his own brand of sentimentality to Crane's. What becomes ultimately more interesting are the questions surrounding Crane's article on the miners: why he wrote it and for whom; what kinds of working-class issues made the newspapers of his day; what effects stories like his might have had on miners' lives.

Hartsock's sometimes strained efforts to compare literary journalism to canonical literature become particularly troubling when he turns to nineteenth-century narrative reports about African Americans. Early in Chapter One, he pairs Lafcadio Hearn's description of Dolly, "a brown . . . girl of the levee, with the lithe strength of a pantheress," to Anton Chekhov's description of the dog Wiggles, "who had a black coat and a long body" (28). For Hartsock, Hearn's description of Dolly captures a "paradoxical human complexity" that foreshadows Chekhov's realism; he even goes so far as to state that "Wiggles, like Dolly, had a disagreeable aspect, even as he was redeemed by his deference and meekness, as she was by her face 'fresh with youthful roundness" (29). Hearn's portrait is less realistic or "novelistic" than it is highly sexualized, from Dolly's "passionate, pouting mouth" to her "compactly knit figure" (29). And, Hartsock's decision to compare her with Chekhov's black dog is questionable, to say the least.

Almost as offensive as the Dolly-Wiggles argument is the one in Chapter Five on the "New Journalism." Here, Hartsock chooses an item that clearly incorporates a kind of misogynist burlesque (about a knife thrower and his gluttonous wife) to exhibit as a sample of literary journalism. He goes on

at some length about the beleaguered husband and the increasingly larger target of his knife-throwing act, concluding that the so-called humor is Chekhovian. "'Why does she eat, eat, eat? Why does she grow fat? . . . She does it on purpose to ruin me,'" Hartsock quotes (161). The point of this excerpt is not to highlight the use of "grotesque humor" or to investigate the dubious appeal of circus shows but to illuminate how the journalist "teases us out of thought with the inconclusive present" (161). This Bakhtinian refrain — the "inconclusive present" — is a central claim of Hartsock's study and generally allows him to avoid taking a critical stance against his subject.

Hartsock argues that the enduring goals of nineteenth-century narrative literary journalism included humane reporting and respectful representation of the "social Other" (72), but these two aspirations never come into focus in the strange and sentimental examples he provides. Again, Hartsock quotes Hearn, this time from a story about an African American man whom Hearn compares to Victor Hugo's Quasimodo. "Each prolonged tone [of the steamboat whistles] awakes to fresh life," writes Hearn, "some little half-forgotten chapter in the simple history of the Child of the Levee" (72). Admitting that Hearn's words may sound paternalistic, Hartsock nonetheless stresses that they are "remarkable" in their sympathy and that Hearn "lived openly with a mulatto woman, which eventually cost him one of his newspaper jobs" (73). Throughout his study, Hartsock's examples of narrative literary journalism indicate preoccupations with African Americans, immigrant communities, and working-class men. Not only do these examples leave the reporters open to charges of tourism and fetishism, they are also unconvincing as examples of "attempts to narrow the gulf between subjectivity and the objectified Other" — Hartsock's recurring contention (187).

Hartsock's obvious enthusiasm for his subject does not make up for the approach he takes and the questions he avoids. As Gayatri Spivak argues, critiques of canonical exclusions should aim not to enlarge the canon or construct a "countercanon," but to "dethrone canonical method: not only in literary criticism but in social production" (Spivak 276). In the last pages of his book, Hartsock makes reference to the Holocaust and maintains that narrative literary journalists remind us of the value of "bearing witness" (225). This is a fair claim, and one that illuminates the work of novelists who, like reporters, wish to document and interpret historical events. But, true to form, he overstates his point with the warning that by "sidestepping those issues [of bearing witness], or in distancing oneself from them, one's subjectivity can remain alienated and disengaged — from murder and the Holocaust" (225).

Such statements, although dramatic, prove neither that narrative literary journalists heroically battle social and existential alienation nor that their academic marginalization is as outrageous as Hartsock says it is. (DANA MEDORO, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA)

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'CHRISTOPHER FYNISK. *Infant Figures: The Death of the Infans and Other Scenes of Origin*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000. Pp. 199. Paper US \$22.95; cloth US \$57.95.

This book is about "an emergent figuration that attends a human subject's birth to language"; it is about a "material relation that is 'before' or 'otherwise than' being" (1). One of the greatest difficulties in understanding the book comes from trying to appreciate what these phrases mean. Perhaps the best way to take them is as adumbrations of a speculative psychology that is unfolded in the chapters of the book. For Christopher Fynisk's *Infant Figures* is not based on any empirical studies about the development of language, nor is it concerned to ground its theses in corrigible data of human behaviour. It is a thoroughly speculative work that begins from the metaphysical assumption that there is a subject prior to and independent of language. It assumes further that the subject's transition to language is always traumatic, because it implies the "death of the infant," which, as far as I can grasp it means the loss of primal subjectivity. (Primal subjectivity is original, independent, and individual; it is unclear whether it is therefore thought to be in some sense veridical or not.) Having made these assumptions about the death of the infant, Fynisk elaborates what he takes to be expressions of it in works of philosophy/literature (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Lacan) and in works of art (Francis Bacon and Salvatore Puglia). It appears that Fynisk assumes that the "the death of the infant" is a necessary psychological construction, but it is not clear whether he thinks that it explains phenomena like texts and works of art, or whether they are to count as evidence for it. Nor is it clear, from the way the book is set out, whether the contents are supposed to persuade us that there is an "emergent figuration" or a "material relation" of the sort described. It appears rather that on the assumption that the speculative psychology is true, a clarification of it is always

possible through texts and works of art. "If we accept that the opening of language is indissociable from an experience (before experience) of a kind of death, there must be in our speaking, if only as a trace, the death of the child" (50). The charitable reader may have to withhold objections of circularity throughout the argument.

Infant Figures is arranged in a triptych as though it were itself a work of art. As in painting, where the connections between the panels of a triptych need to be inferred, the relation of the parts of the book to each other is enthymematic. Each appears to be meant to support and amplify the other two, without informing us how to see its relation to the others. The figure of the enthymeme is further subordinated and reflected in the structure of the first part, "What remains at a crucifixion," a juxtaposition of two essays in which the first appears in the top half of the page and the second in the bottom, in different typeface, with separate headers and page numbers. The two essays of the first section make obvious reference to one another but present themselves as distinct. There are echoes of this structure in the second part of the book, "Infant Figures," which contains an appendix on Antigone's Friendship, and in the third part, which is a dialogue (two voices) with artist Salvatore Puglia. I confess that I found the artistic arrangement of the book more confusing than illuminating. It made me look, in vain, for a meaning "otherwise than" the being of the commentary, in what was *not* said by the author, but only alluded to or depicted, and this investigation was encouraged by the claim that there are traces of the death of the infant in everything that is said. In fact, the presentation of this book is so esoteric as to make a credulous reader wonder whether it is intentional that there is a missing letter "t" (symbolically: an absent cross) from the phrase "Publicaion Data" on the book's colophon page. I would have been more comfortable with straightforward exposition. If the claim of the book is that this is not possible (given the thesis about what communication represents), then we must accept that all attempts at clarification involve an infinite regress.

Part one, "What remains at a crucifixion" contains two essays, one about Nietzsche and the other about twentieth century English painter Francis Bacon. The essay about Nietzsche, "On Cruelty," deals with the creation of a "sovereign subject," a subject who has "carried the logic of asceticism to extreme limit by carrying the value of truthfulness to the point where truthfulness itself comes into question and a creative decision is required concerning the 'Why' of existence in its totality" (18). The sovereign subject is self-authorising, self-validating, a supreme affirmation of will, but it can only

come about through asceticism, self-torture, cruelty, and bad conscience. "It begins with the howl of the frustrated animal, and then takes shape in a process of self-contradiction that is finally directed and interpreted by the ascetic priest. The caged beast suffers from its own strength, its own affects, and turns this strength upon itself as the cause of its suffering" (27). The essay about Bacon, "What remains at a crucifixion," interprets (some of) the paintings of Francis Bacon as Nietzschean expressions of the will to power, understood as the will of a sovereign subject. The paintings Fynsk chooses to reproduce can readily be seen as expressions of animality, asceticism, self-torture and bad conscience. As interpretation of art this is illuminating; it constitutes the best material in the book. One wonders nevertheless how well it supports the main theme. Both the putative death of the infant and the creation of a Nietzschean sovereign subject involve overcomings of a prior subject in which traces of the overcoming are "fossilized" in the new subject. But that is as far as it goes. There is nothing in Nietzsche or Bacon that would force one to conclude that *everyone* must undergo a transformation involving self-cruelty in order to speak and write.

Part two, "The Death of the Infant" has as its epigraph a passage of Maurice Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster* that contains the statement, "... nothing is what there is, and first of all nothing beyond." It may be this statement that drives the feelings of paradox and futility in the writing that follows. For the chapter begins as though it were going to be a commentary on the death of the infant, but after one paragraph it becomes a narrative ("So he began but it was not long before he declared he could not sustain a discourse on this topic," 50), and then, only one paragraph later, it becomes an oracular dialogue. This style is apparently adopted because discourse always fails, because it is somehow necessarily insufficient. All there can be are "pointings to" or "recountings" or "evocations" of something that is "quasi-transcendental" and "compelling." But in fact the style is ironic, because in what follows Fynsk appeals (in what might be called merely the assertive *voice* of the dialogue) to the "logical imperative" that "language must mark its finitude" (54). If that claim is taken to mean that language can be none other than just what it is, it is trivial. If, on the other hand, it is taken to mean that language somehow points beyond itself to an infinite by means of which it qualifies itself as finite, that is mysticism. And it is a logical imperative that the language of mysticism can have no logical imperatives. The second part of the book exemplifies the death of the infant, just as it exemplifies the writing of the disaster. It meanders through the thought of Hegel, Freud,

Lacan, Heidegger and Derrida, drifting in and out of qualifying, banal insertions like this one: "In all honesty I couldn't really claim we had progressed. But from the very first introduction of Leclaire's phrase — was it a phrase? I had sensed a pull in the directions we were taking, a light pressure" (125). The phrase in question is most probably the one that appears at the very beginning of part two, "la mort impossible nécessaire" (53), but the question there is not whether the phrase is a phrase or not, but whether it belongs to Blanchot or Leclaire. Part two ends with a brief commentary on the tragedy of *Antigone*, which suggests that Antigone's relation to the divine laws is analogous to the relation a speaker of a language has to the *infans*. Fynsk concludes that "it is possible to find in Antigone's evocation of *philia* (in her words and her acts) a link with a more modern experience of 'unknowable community'" (143).

Part three of *Infant Figures*, "An Art of the Possible," is presented as an actual dialogue (as opposed to the fictional dialogue of part two) between Fynsk and the artist Salvatore Puglia. Puglia was at the time engaged in a project of effacement of the photographic image. The dialogue begins with Puglia expressing the view that this project is doomed to failure. As a presentation of Puglia's artistic views and practices, this chapter is clear and informative. Puglia explains that he views the photographic image of a person as a cruelty, an act of torture (hence his connection to the themes of part one of the book). His activity in effacing the photographic image lay in "disarticulating the elements of representation" (149), and his stance was "anti-aesthetic." He says, "I believe that this procedure of transforming documents, which approaches a painterly handling, is one that uses the instruments of an aesthetics of taste, but must end by being anti-aesthetic" (152). In this way his art figures the death of the infant (at least generally, as something that effaces itself and its author), but there remain traces in the possibility of art, for "despite everything, there is an appeal to the fact that there is a *possible*" (164). Thus Fynsk returns to the idea of a crucifixion death, and the question of what remains at a crucifixion. The triptych is complete. If I may draw a conclusion about the book independently of its linguistic, philosophical and psychological claims, I would say that it stands up better as a book about art. Art in the broadest possible sense of the term might be understood as the manner of the infinite. Art avoids boundaries, it uses them, blurs them, ruptures them, creates them, founders upon them, transcends them, ignores them, obliterates them, embraces them. For this reason we do not comprehend art; and yet it is not even possible to say that art is essentially

distinct from cognitive science (see 84). It is in the atmosphere of art, with all the paradoxical consequences it holds for communication, that Christopher Fynsk has written *Infant Figures*. (EUGENIO BENITEZ, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY)

'CATERINA NELLA COTRUPÌ. *Northrop Frye and the foetus of Process*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Paper CDN \$15.95; cloth CDN \$43.00.

Frye has been much marginalised and misunderstood in the past. Like so many books on Frye, Cotrupi's opens with a discussion of why this might be. Frye has been dismissed by structuralists for not being scientific enough, condemned by romantics for being too pedantic, too wrapped up in the centripetal order of words for discourse theorists, and, of course, too universalising for the Marxists. In our late ironic age of pessimism and scepticism, Frye's disinterested liberal humanism and insistence upon romantic Utopias might make him appear to be some sort of misfit. According to Cotrupi, the fact that Frye can attract such a wide range of parsimony is testament to his synoptic outlook, and this, in itself, is proof of his contemporary usefulness. What is more, according to Frye's own theories, it is just this sort of jaded and decadent environment, where irony can be read as the death throes of realism, that is supposed to herald an imminent return to a mythological and mythopoeic age.

Despite this opening, Cotrupi's book is not so much concerned with the current relevance of Frye's ideas as it is with his connection to the past. Her book is an exploration of the links and affinities between Frye's writings and the works of Giambattista Vico. Though the two were writing some two hundred years apart, both Frye and Vico sought a similar sort of unified theory of culture. Frye regularly and emphatically acknowledges his debt to Blake, another eighteenth century writer and thinker, but there is a paucity of direct references to Vico in Frye's public and published writings. However, Cotrupi observes that Frye's notebooks are littered with private, unpublished references. This suggests that Vico was regularly used as some sort of starting point for Frye's musings, or that Vico regularly played Virgil to Frye's Dante, guiding him through the critical maze.

Vico attempted to account for the manifest ways in which culture gives a human form to nature. In so doing he embarked upon an encyclopaedic

mission resembling Fryc's in a great many respects. Vice's interest in the place of literature and culture in society, and his scientific approach to this vast problem arc both clearly Frygian, in their scale and in their method. The typologies, phases, and levels used by Vico and Frye to describe varieties of language and language use are illuminated by Cotrupi in such away as to strike the reader with their closeness. The sheer immensity of the pu/.xle is, for both Fryc and Vico, equally Utopian in its apparent over-ambition, and, more profoundly, in its real aims. Vice's great conundrum concerned the processes by which humans moved out of nature and into culture, his search for the origins of culture beginning with the sublimation of the often terrible forces of nature into divinities — thus thunder becomes Jehovah. For Vico the human ability to reconcile our being in and of both nature and culture comes through the use of language. The process begins not through understanding in a rational sense, but in giving the sea, the sky and the earth enormous powers, senses and personalities. Such anthropomorphism is wholly reliant not upon simile, but metaphor — a sense of This is That.

In light of the above, anyone possessing a passing familiarity with Frye's work would have to declare that, sooner or later, Vico's writings were sure to attract Frye's attention. Just when this may have first happened remains slightly uncertain, though Cotrupi finds the first public reference to Vico in a review Frye wrote in the 1946 edition of *Canadian Forum*, some two years before the translation into English of Vico's *The New Science* in 1948. In *Spiritus Mundi* (1976), Frye lists Vico as one of his heroes from his student days, recognising him as some sort of "kindred soul" back as early as the mid 1930s. Vico's cyclical view of history is reminiscent of Fryc's own love of cyclical forms, eternal returns and such, but, whereas he often acknowledges his debt to other cyclical thinkers like Frazer, Toynbec and Spengler, his public citations of Vico are scarce. The next published reference is in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), but this is oblique and passing. Only towards the end of Frye's career, in the introduction to *Words with Power* (1990), do we find him openly and unreservedly acknowledging his great debt to Vico.

In just over one hundred pages Cotrupi manages, in dazzlingly dense prose, to explain this debt in all its complexity and profundity. Cannily, she avoids implying some sort of direct "influence" — always notoriously difficult to prove — preferring to describe passages of Frye's writing as having a Vichian "slant" or conceptual "feel." Her quest begins in the eighteenth century, with its discourses on the sublime, on nature and on human understanding, an era that linked imagination, freedom and social concerns

and balanced between reason and romanticism, just as Frye's work is similarly situated. For Frye, the notion of the human creation of culture begins in this period. The century that gave us Blake and Vico, two writers concerned with the making over of the natural world into one with a human form, was also the age of revolution, that is, of world-making, in a political sense, too. The giving of a human form to nature is central to Frye's ideas on what literature is, and is *for*, his literary theory extending into a humanist mission that provides a vision of a better world attainable through art and education.

Above all, the eighteenth century was a Longinian era. Cotrupi compares Aristotle with Longinus to contrast the former's aesthetic apprehension of literature to achieve catharsis with the latter's creative, psychoactive approach to literature as a process leading to *ecstasis*. Seen from within a Longinian perspective, literature is an experiential, subjective event, not an object to be analysed, which enables the growth of the self through its production and consumption. Within the Longinian paradigm a literature of process leads to the direct apprehension of the sublime and the Divine. Working within this paradigm Vico discovered that there is an experience of the sublime at the root of both religion and language. Cotrupi's decision to incorporate into her book title the phrase "poetics of process" is a reference to the Longinian view of literature as process, not product. The "poetics" she refers to is a kind of structural poetics, that phrase being one of the working titles for the book that was to become the *Anatomy of Criticism*. Though Frye never explicitly formulated a model or theory of the sublime, in the *Anatomy* or elsewhere, Cotrupi argues that the idea of the sublime is always there, implicitly, throughout his writing. What is more, Longinus warned that an apprehension of the sublime is dangerous if not balanced with knowledge of a different, more rational kind. The reader of Frye will hear echoes, especially of Frye's writings on education and the social uses of literature and criticism.

A poetics of process is reliant on metaphor: nature *is* the poet *is* the reader. This sort of interpenetration and reconciliation will be instantly recognisable to anyone familiar with Frye's writings. Longinian thinking gave Frye the opportunity to privilege, epistemologically, the creative and imaginative over the rational and objective. Cotrupi demonstrates this Longinian thinking to be close to Vico's aphoristic *verum factum*: the truth is what we make, not what we perceive. We do not "discover" an objective world through subjective sensory apprehension, using language to label our discoveries; rather, it is language that brings the world into being. In *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) Frye discusses Blake's rejection of the Lockean understanding

of perception as the object impinging on the mind through the eye. In Blake's alternative, it is the mind that reaches out through the eye to seize the object. Cotrupi suggests that Blake's rejection of Locke is akin to Vico's rejection of Descartes. It is this anti-Cartesian stance, where object and subject are not opposed but reconciled, that Blake, Vico and Frye share. From this position, literature is not an object or product, but a process — the coming together of object and subject. Nevertheless, in Frye's public writings, Longinus is rarely cited, unlike Aristotle, who is often named and discussed, as is Blake. Longinus and Vico, then, are Frye's invisible influences. One major task of Cotrupi's book is to make the Vichian, Longinian underpinnings of Frye's writings more visible.

Vico concluded that humans are confined not by what is objectively real, but by what we can conceive, or imagine into being. Vico's term *ingenium* describes some sort of god-like power enabling humans to create form where there is no form. If the operations of the Inquisition meant that Vico had to be oblique about this, or at least stop short of declaring absolute coincidence of the Divine and human imagination, Cotrupi demonstrates his extreme closeness to this position. Within the poetics of process, God is best understood not as a noun, but as a verb, not a thing to be beheld but a process fulfilling itself. This unity of divine and human imagination as eternal and infinite process is both the foundation of Frye's poetics of process and the core of his religious faith.

Cotrupi's opening chapter is a very condensed, heavy-going and daunting introduction, filled with references to a multitude of ideas and thinkers, most of which we encounter again in the remainder of her book. The five chapters that follow do not get much easier for the reader. Rigorous does not even come close to describing her mind-blowing exposition of Vico's genius for extracting sense out of paradox. Cotrupi's familiarity with Latin and Italian enables some intriguing etymological probing. Her knowledge of the classics is impressive equally in its range and depth, as is her understanding of everything from poetics through philosophy to postmodernism; Cotrupi can name-check Aristotle and Frederic Jameson in the space of a paragraph. The sheer density of ideas in this slim volume might suggest that only serious and well-read scholars and philosophers should consider approaching this book. Certainly, it should in no way be thought of as an introduction to the works of Frye or Vico. It is probably best that the reader is familiar with Frye, or Vico, or ideally both, in order to fully appreciate the resonances, parallels, and sheer brilliance of this broad, deep and close reading of both authors.

This book illuminates a very neglected corner of Frye studies, and, as such, represents another important missing link for Frye scholars. Cotrupi has produced a very concentrated and challenging read through careful and painstaking research. The reader may have to work hard to keep up with her, as she manages to imply or gesture toward a whole lot more than she says, while saying a very great deal, indeed. (DIANE DUBOIS, LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, UK)

*TOM COHEN, ed. *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A. Critical Reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 344. £55.00.

Deconstruction's initial phase as the *enfant terrible* of university departments of literature seems in retrospect to have been well eclipsed by the end of the 1980s. Once the word "deconstruction" entered the banter of sportscasters, pop stars and their attendant V-Jays, one could feel reasonably confident that it had gained a certain mainstream acceptability and lost, to say the least, a certain critical force. To the extent that the verb "to deconstruct" lives on in the popular culture, with a sort of post-industrial half-life that expires 50% with each passing year, it seems to do so mostly as a funkier way of saying *to analyse* or *to critique*, one which does double duty in signaling that the speaker picked up a degree in Communications before beginning his or her career in the media. In the academy, the dominance of New Historicism, Post-Colonial and Cultural Studies by the 1990s shifted critical inquiry decidedly more toward the Foucaultian problematics of *discourse* and *power/knowledge*, a more familiar, even comforting, terrain in some respects as such approaches returned to age old concerns with the interrelations of text and world. While many of the founders and practitioners of these approaches incorporated good doses of deconstruction into increasingly hybrid critical practices, deconstructive concerns with such textual (dis)functions as aporia, supplementarity, *différance*, and undecidability, and its reading of a relatively canonical philosophical and literary tradition, came to be derided as "high theory" — formalism in its death throes. On another front, the always prevalent mistrust within the humanities of "theory" of all ilks, although with deconstruction frequently standing in as part for the whole, has regained considerable ground and there has developed an increasingly comfortable sense that things are returning to "normal."

In the midst of our contemporary scene, the path towards which sketched above albeit all too hastily and schematically, *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader* promises a timely assessment of, and engagement with, Derrida's writings some quarter century after they first began to impact on the Anglo-American academy with the translations of such major works as *Of Grammatology*. A timely assessment in several respects. The very absorption of deconstruction and Derrida with whom it is most centrally associated, into a cultural mainstream (a movie of fairly wide release has recently been made about him) presses the questions: what does deconstruction mean today? What critical force remains? What is its current importance, its legacies, its futures? Additionally, Derrida's initial and most infamous impact on the humanities depended largely upon an engagement with early works deriving from his "biblio-blitz" of 1967 and the subsequent translation of these works into English over the next decade. But Derrida has gone on over the subsequent three and a half decades to be an extremely prolific writer and if his work is marked with compelling continuities of concern there are equally compelling differences. The earlier terminology of *différance*, phonologocentrism and supplementarity has itself been supplemented with such additional (non)concepts as the gift, mourning as well as an entire "hauntology" of spectres and ghosts. Thus another compelling question is the significance of Derrida's more recent work within various fields of humanistic inquiry and the volume's editor Tom Cohen announces in his introduction that the collection will be centrally concerned with this question. Furthermore, even the occasional reader of Derrida's work over the last two decades will have been struck by his increasingly explicit engagement with questions of ethics, religion and politics. All of this hints at the tantalizing possibility of a more affirmative deconstruction as in the working out of a deconstructive politics, ethics etc, and Cohen likewise announces this as another shared concern of the collected essays. In examining deconstruction Cohen writes the concern is "not to rehearse again the techniques of reading or the assault on metaphysics that provided the earliest context for the polemics surrounding its reception. It might, instead, direct itself primarily to what Derrida terms affirmative 'deconstruction'" (4). It is as if deconstruction, most chiefly associated with a rigorous dismantling of texts and conceptual systems, might now be expected to provide a return on the investment in such a process, much as the board of a corporation expects it to return a profit after a rigorous downsizing.

Cohen's introduction dispenses with the usual discussion of the occasion and context of the book with accompanying outlines of contributors arguments and provides, rather, a generalized discussion of the future of deconstruction in the humanities. The first chapter then consists of a substantial essay by Derrida: "*The Future of the Profession or the university without condition (thanks to the 'Humanities,' what could take place tomorrow)*" The subsequent chapters are each devoted to engaging, variously, the impact, significance or implications of Derrida's work within particular disciplines or fields of study within the humanities broadly defined. The list of contributors is impressive ranging from intellectual luminaries to lesser known scholars who have nonetheless done impressive work in their particular fields. J Hillis Miller contributes a chapter on Derrida and literature; Peggy Kamuf considers the implications of Derrida's thought for the understanding of gender; Geoffrey Bennington explores certain implications of Derrida's thought in the realm of politics; Rene Major traces Derrida's vexed and fascinating relationship to psychoanalysis and so forth for aesthetics, philosophy, ethics, law, history and the study of technology.

It would be good to know something of the occasion and context of Derrida's text commencing the volume about which the reader learns nothing in either an editorial footnote to the text nor in the preface or introduction to the volume. Near the beginning of his text Derrida describes it as a "chapter" (24), suggesting it was written specifically for this volume but the back cover of the book describes the text as an "address" and indeed much of the rest of the text bears the marks, like so much of Derrida's published work of the last several decades, of oral delivery — "as soon as I began to speak . . . if I had the time, I could recall... etc" (36, 42). Most likely the text is both: an initial address revised to form a chapter in the work but, again, would not readers of Derrida wish to have such traces of its production marked? This is a small quibble (open obviously to deconstruction in terms of its desire for origin) but indicative of too little care and attention — too little of what David Richter once aptly described as "the dull duty of an editor" — in bringing the volume to press which manifests itself in other ways as well. J Hillis Miller's essay, for example, more than once quotes Derrida indicating the source in the parenthetical reference to be "Passions" but nothing in the scholarly apparatus contains the complete bibliographic citation for this work and the editors have brought little consistency to this essay with respect to whether to translate passages of Derrida into English or not. More fundamentally, very little effort appears to have been brought to bear to achieve at least some minimal

consistency in the general level at which these essays are addressed. Thus Miller, for example, provides a very clear explanation of Husserl's concept of an *object* as an intentional act of consciousness (67) thereby assuming a broad general readership not necessarily familiar with even the most fundamental concepts of twentieth-century continental philosophy. On the other hand, Hent de Vries and others aspire to a dense philosophical shorthand in their prose much of which will be a tough slog even for those versed in these traditions.

The basic conception and overall organization of the book as outlined above, however, is extremely promising. All who read Derrida do so inevitably within particular disciplinary perspectives, ways of reading, attuned to particular strands of the texts which appear to enlighten or problematize the way we have come to understand our fields of inquiry and the kinds of questions we have come to ask. One knows at the same time that Derrida's work has come to have an impact on other fields of inquiry without really knowing how or why that is the case. This book, self-described in the opening sentence of the preface as potentially "the first overtly *trans-disciplinary* 'reader' devoted to Derrida's work in its current phase" (ix), promises a unique opportunity to begin to achieve such an understanding. Potentially such an opportunity could not only, to cite two time honoured goals of the humanist tradition, *broaden* and *deepen* one's understanding of this challenging body of work, it could also transform the way one reads Derrida within one's own disciplinary framework or, *faux le mieux*, encourage one to read him within several overlapping frameworks at once.

In order to begin to fulfill such a promise the essays in this collection would, it seems, have to meet several minimal but challenging expectations. For one thing there is a pedagogical expectation to be met. In meeting such an expectation the essays would have to carefully trace the implications of Derrida's thought within a particular field. This would entail some patient outlining of the kinds of questions and forms of understanding that have been at issue within a given field and how the intervention of Derrida's thought allows one think through these differently as well the possible significance of such differences. Furthermore, this would all have to be achieved in a language which, while assuming a general familiarity with Derrida's work and terminology, remained sensitive and open to permitting those unfamiliar with the specialized concerns, traditions and vocabularies of a particular discipline to productively engage the work. Cohen indeed aligns the volume with such a pedagogical purpose in the second sentence of the preface. "These essays

were not only to be 'pedagogic' in demonstrating one or more ways to read Derrida's extension into these fields" (ix). Although the scare quotes around "pedagogic" in this sentence, as well as the indication that this was not the only purpose of the essays, may tacitly indicate, in addition to the conventional deconstructive insistence upon the provisionality of all concepts, the editor's retrospective admission that a number of the essays either don't succeed in this respect or entirely skirt such a purpose.

Indeed several of the essays in this collection rise to meet fully the challenges of the expectations outlined above while quite a few others frustrate or defeat them. Margaret Davies' "Derrida and law: legitimate fictions" provides the most outstanding contribution of the volume, a wonderfully patient, lucid, yet nonetheless complex, thinking through of certain implications of Derrida's thought for the study of law and justice. Although unfamiliar with legal studies and the often abstruse languages of the law, I came away from this essay with some valuable understanding of the fascinating interventions and complications that Derrida's thought has made, or could make, into the traditions of legal formalism and realism that long dominated the field. And as one would have hoped in reading each of these essays, the understanding of Derrida's implications in this particular field allows one to see more forcefully, or differently, the implications of Derrida's thought in one's own field and (dare one say?) *on the whole*. Nowhere else are Derrida's concerns with violence and justice made as compelling and urgent as they are in this essay.

Although one might assume Derrida's relationship to literature to be the most well trodden of subjects, J Hillis Miller's essay "Derrida and Literature" likewise manages to be amongst the most compelling and fresh of the collection. Miller and Davies essays, in fact, form wonderfully suggestive counterpoints to each other allowing us better to comprehend the significance of deconstruction where language would impose itself most forcefully upon the world and where it might least insist upon any such imposition. The engagement with Derrida in literary criticism has often been one of applying or mimicking his close, rhetorically orientated manner of reading to tease out the aporias in a given work. Miller, however, remains focused on the status in Derrida's work of the literary as an always potentially aberrant possibility of language and an institutionalized way of reading language attuned to, and (sometimes) permissive of, such possibilities — a topic which has received much less attention in discussions of Derrida and benefits from its elaboration here. For Derrida, Miller suggests, "literature depends on the possibility of

detaching language from its firm embeccledness in a social or biographical context and allowing it to play freely as fiction . . . Literature is an exploitation of the possibility that any utterance may be 'non-serious'" (60, 65). Such an understanding of the literary need not by any means be confined to language traditionally marked off as literature and indeed some of Derrick's most productively transgressive readings have derived from treating traditionally non-literary language (philosophical, anthropological etc) as literary. For Derrida, literature as such a possibility of language, is inextricably tied to the history and fate of democracy and thus the stakes are high. Miller reminds us, however, in a fashion that is once again timely, that literary criticism has traditionally tried to read literature seriously, as though it were not literature, by firmly embedding it in some kind of context, social, historical, biographical, psychological etc. Miller's essay appears to be the most in tune with Derrida's own contribution on the future of the humanities where the unconditional and the hypothetical, the *as if*, which form something like the condition of the possibility of the humanities and their futures, are closely associated with literature, its histories and institutions (52).

Other contributions, I have suggested, frustrate or defeat the expectation that one might come away from an essay with an understanding of the relevance or implications of Derrida's thought within a given field or for a given set of questions. In treating gender Peggy Kamuf, one of the key translators of Derrida over the last two decades, works in an arena where deconstruction has continued to demonstrate a compelling energy and relevance, most centrally perhaps in the work of Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick. (Although queer theory is inextricably tied to questions of gender, it is nonetheless a peculiar shortcoming of the collection that it doesn't devote a separate chapter to this area which, perhaps above all others, has revitalized and politicized deconstruction). The central purpose of Kamuf's essay appears to be to out deconstruct Butler on the question of gender. While Butler has endeavored influentially to theorize a nonessentialist understanding of gender, one which deconstructs the sex/gender opposition, the upshot of Kamuf's essay is that Butler is too recuperative by half. In supposedly privileging gender as production over gender as inscription Butler's thought posits an origin, or ground, of gender, and thus falls into the hierarchical binary trap of western metaphysics. (Despite Cohen's promise in the introduction that there will be no rehearsals of such well worn deconstructive maneuvers there are more than a few.) What the essay goes on to say about gender in the many pages that follow upon this demonstration amounts to, after much painstaking

effort to complicate and qualify each assertion, the rather unsurprising position that it is something like *différance* and that it is always simultaneously inscribed and effaced. Even a patient reader of this essay might not be faulted for coming to the conclusion, an unfortunate and ultimately unnecessary one however, that there is little point in engaging Derrida's work for thinking through questions of gender. If on the other hand, one wants to begin to discover the possibilities of deconstructive thought for gender studies, Butler's much anthologized "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" is still the best place to begin.

Whether meeting expectations or frustrating them is to be positively or negatively evaluated is, of course, far from certain in the context of a book devoted to Derrida and the ongoing (dis)articulations of deconstructive thought. Indeed much is far from certain in this book, often self-consciously and affirmatively so. In the final paragraph of his own quite lengthy meditation on the future of the humanities and the university more broadly, Derrida admits: "I do not know if what I am saying here is intelligible, if it make sense" (56). None of the other contributors allow themselves such a frank and refreshing admission but there will be few honest readers of this collection who won't have similar doubts when engaging at a good handful of these essays. Anyone who finds reading Derrida and his interlocutors worthwhile must of course put faith in the value of a tension between that which makes sense and that which does not make sense and a concomitant faith that the latter is not necessarily *nonsense*. Without such a tension one could not begin to think differently as the perfectly perspicuous will always be to some extent the perfectly familiar — an affirmation of what one already knows. The most productive engagements with deconstruction over the last two decades and more — found, for example, in the work of Jonathan Culler, Geoffrey Bennington, Tiltottama Rajan, Marc Redfield, David L Clark, Orrin Wang, Pengh Cheah — maintains this tension in its best moments. (The influence of Paul de Man on many in the above list may be instructive here). In the case of each of these theorists the attempt is made to use the given structures of language and logical argument patiently and clearly until such points as one glimpses the limits and aporias of such structures. It is at these limits that a carefully employed Derridian problematic is often highly instructive for glimpsing the possibilities of thinking *otherwise*.

The shortcoming of too many of the essays in *Derrida and the Humanities*, however, is that they dispense with such a tension. To this list I would add in addition to Kamuf, David Wills on aesthetics, Christopher Fynsk on

philosophy, and Hent de Vries on ethics — each of which is all the more disappointing given that these are all areas where the impact of Derrida's more recent writing could and should be made compellingly. A key difficulty in each case is that the writers give themselves over too freely, to *Derrida-speak*, to mimicking Derrida's own style of discourse with few if any of the compelling turns of thought that such a style — inextricably tied as it is to the many addresses and seminars Derrida has delivered and published over the years — permits him to achieve. Amongst other things the mimicking of the style may consist of lengthy references to how one *might have* proceeded to deal with the question at hand, but how one will not take such a path and all the reasons for not doing so; a proliferation of interrogative s, and of synonyms or alternatives for each word entered into the text; a problematizing and qualifying of numerous words and assertions with frequent scare quotes, and the insistence that a statement just made must not be understood in a particular way; references to how one would deal with particular issues in great detail if one had the space; neologisms and-or frequent play with language. In moments both comic and disturbing the heights of "high theory" begin to resemble nothing so much as the linguistic stumbling of a George W. Bush Jr, as when Hent de Vries in the course of a particularly circumlocutory discussion, proffers "possibilization" (175) for our edification. In what I read as an instance of unwitting auto-critique (for one should add the editor's introduction to the above list) Cohen best sums up the difficulty: "One of the enigmas of Derrida's trajectory has been its viral impact — that is, that where it seems directly assimilated, mimed, written-with, it can at times appear least transformative" (16). (ADAM CARTER, UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE)