

REVIEWS

* MARCEL CORNIS-POPE. *Hermeneutic Desire and Critical Rewriting: Narrative Interpretation in the Wake of Poststructuralism*. New York: St. Martin Press, 1994. 357 pp. US \$55.00

Professor Cornis-Pope's book is an exciting experiment in combining literary theory and criticism with pedagogical practice in the class room. The book falls loosely into three sections. The first section contains a lengthy introductory chapter in which Cornis-Pope presents an excellent overview of current theoretical approaches to the literary text as well as a persuasive argument for his own critical methodology, emphasizing strategies of rereading / rewriting. The second section (chapters 2 through 5) focuses particularly on the conflicting narratological approaches to Henry James's fiction by various contemporary schools of literary interpretation, including reader-oriented criticism, deconstruction, feminism, and sociosemiotics. The third section (chapters 6 through 8) is organized around two experimental seminars that Cornis-Pope taught in the 1980s, the better part of which also dealt with Henry James's criticism and fiction, especially with *The Art of the Novel*, "The Figure in the Carpet," and *The Turn of the Screw*. Here the critical contributions of "professional readers" (the author's phrase) of the second section are contrasted with student seminar papers centring on James's work. As Cornis-Pope points out, he encouraged his students to "produce strong, self-conscious readings" of James's stories, and to "reflect on their critical and rhetorical agendas" (41). By dividing the interpretive process into several stages such as first and second reading responses, critical analyses, and class critiques and rewrites, he sought to dramatize for his students (as well as for the readers of his book) an "interactional dynamic of interpretation, the subtle blend of two supplementary, rather than irreconcilable, critical paradigms: one interpretive-analytic, the other reconstructive-figurative" (41).

Although Cornis-Pope's study exhibits some of the best practical spirit of I.A. Richards and his followers, it goes far beyond a traditional reader-oriented criticism, selectively and judiciously applying throughout its textual analyses some of the most valuable critical insights of contemporary theory on both sides of the Atlantic. It is hard to do justice, in this short space, to Cornis-Pope's learned and sophisticated arguments — his critical apparatus is quite impressive, indeed, at times overwhelming. Nevertheless, his main thesis is both clear and reasonable. According to Cornis-Pope, a genuinely dynamic model of literary interpretation ought to mediate between "hermeneutic desire" and "critical rereading / rewriting," that is, between the need for interpretation embedded in our cultural genes and critical self-awareness as a motor of cultural change.

While hermeneutic desire produces an economy of closure in which the critical process is arrested with the discovery of a hidden center that stabilizes and controls all meaning in a given literary text, critical rereading / rewriting produces an economy of open-endedness, with meaning being ceaselessly created and destroyed through an infinite process whereby critical reader and literary text become interchangeable and inseparable. The first stance is mainly adopted by traditional literary criticism, including Marxist and sociological kinds, while the second stance is mainly adopted by current poststructuralist and postmodernist methodologies. Cornis-Pope attempts to mediate between the two positions, and here his most important insight is that both types of methodological approaches have a common origin in desire understood as will to power (even though the author — perhaps deliberately — largely avoids this Nietzschean vocabulary). He cogently demonstrates that Henry James himself is fully aware of the dilemma of all interpretation, poised as it is between truth and falsehood, desire and detachment, authority and free play. As Cornis-Pope shrewdly notes, the type of "critical rewriting" he endorses in his book is not "free from manipulation or from a politics of interest and desires" (296). In this respect, what his own students (and readers) have learned from "James's practice of fiction and criticism is that the adventure of meaning-making must be accompanied by a 'reflective consciousness' that will submit both the written and the 'smothered, unwritten, almost unconscious' stories of a culture (*The American Scene*, 427) to an analysis capable of teasing out their narrative reasons and sociocultural models of mastery" (296). Cornis-Pope finally contends that what James suggests about story-telling in his own fiction may apply to critical writing as well. Thus, critical writing, no less than story-telling, needs to "negotiate the right balance" between closure and open-endedness, between what James calls "a question of interest" and "the adventures of innocence" (297).

Despite its not always unavoidable professional jargon, Cornis-Pope's book is literary theory at its best: seeking to temper the ideological excesses of certain recent schools of criticism, it creatively mediates between traditional and radical critical thought and firmly grounds the literary phenomenon in an all-embracing cultural, ethical, and pedagogical practice. (MIHAI I. SPARIOSU, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA)

*METTE HJORT: *The Strategy of Letters*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. US \$37.50 paper.

Mette Hjort is a young literary theorist the kind of which we have not seen for a while: she combines clarity of analysis and audacity of view. And she is at home in various disciplines: philosophy and game theory, military analysis and discourse ethics, the psychology of emotions and motivations, and, of course, literary theory. What she has to offer from the vantage point of these various

disciplines is neither superficial nor superfluous. Against all the Derridean and Foucauldian echo-chambers that we have heard resonating over the past decade, this theorist boldly asserts that such poststructuralist views, while claiming to explore issues of "power, violence, domination, collusion, and betrayal, ... simultaneously embrace a theoretical position that makes it impossible to do full justice to these topics" (42). Asserting is one thing, however, proving to be in the right another. But also in this respect Hjort has a couple of surprises for her readers.

Chapter 1 opens with an analysis of the term "strategy" as employed in current literary theories. As a first stage, Derrida's conception of "strategy" is shown to systematically negate the traditional sense of the term in an effort to destabilize and undermine its metaphysical content, claiming a non-intentionalist and non-teleological articulation of the concept. Yet this very move is in sharp contrast to the actual interpretive practice of deconstructivist critics, and of Derrida himself. To demonstrate the latter, Hjort convincingly argues that Derrida's defense of Paul de Man (after the emergence of his anti-Semitic writings during the Nazi occupation of Belgium) hinges precisely "on the modest and fallible notions of rationality and agency ... constitutive of practical reason" (28) that have been so much the target of poststructuralist diatribe. Since Derrida's conception of strategy departs radically from at least one instance of his own use of the term, by having recourse to "a hermeneutics of everyday interaction" (31), deconstruction is itself deconstructed.

Foucault's holistic use of "strategy," as a realm of unintended consequences of behaviour fares not much better. The limits of such an approach are outlined by Hjort with a clarity that cuts to the bone. Her criticism is threefold. First, Foucault overstretches the notion of unintended consequences of human action, and thus lays himself open to simple empirical falsification. Furthermore, his notion of the absence of individual agency is incoherent, since according to his own descriptions, actors are involved in estimating outcomes of actions on the basis of global knowledge of recurrent patterns (such as regularities in the rise and fall of commodity prices). Finally, the observation of beneficial consequences of an action is not, contrary to Foucault's conjecture, proof of a "strategic" explanation. The consequence of the explanation cannot account for the occurrence of those events.

After Chapter 2 has taken issue with the poststructuralist tendency to construe "strategy" as an all-inclusive term, thereby severely limiting its analytic and explanatory power, chapter 3 explores some of the concepts to be used in the development of a "pragmatics of letters." Frames, in Bateson's sense of the term, are proposed as quite fundamental in this task. Three different types are subsequently distinguished: stable frames, unstable ones, and ludic phenomena, which may be used strategically to explore situations of uncertainty. The distinctions are demonstrated in a detailed analysis of the belief systems and social

frames as they occur in *Troilus and Cressida*, discussing *en passant* such diverse views as Girard's theory of mimetic desire (which is judged too mechanistic), Fish's notion of interpretive communities (which appears too vague), and Klapp and Scheff's consensus theory (which is found helpful). The latter is applied in an analysis of Andersen's tale "The Emperor's New Clothes," leading to the conclusion that what is needed most is a fine-grained theory providing terms that will allow us "to describe the manner in which the self-understandings of socialized agents combine to produce the social reality in question" (106). This insight also leads to the acceptance of a moderate realism and some basic notions of truth and falsehood in the hermeneutic enterprise as superior to the (presently dominant) conventionalist stance on meaning and interpretation (110-11).

Chapter 4 treats the ways in which the famous *querelle du Tartuffe* can be analyzed strategically. Hjort is somewhat ambiguous in her use of the term here, as the strategies refer both to the various positions and actions taken in Molière's play, and to the different debates in the non-literary context surrounding the play. First of all, the strategic dilemma, that is the fact that the strategist is able to unilaterally dictate the terms of the game to the non-strategist, is analyzed. Confronting Tartuffe's strategic machinations, Elmire cannot but adapt to the terms of his game, and thus become a "mimetic strategist." In such a context, the definitive proof can only take the form of "self-validating evidence" (124), and Elmire successfully provides it by means of her "crucial strategic experiment." Hjort outlines the conditions such an experiment has to satisfy in order to advance the goals of the mimetic strategist: plausibility and pathos: wounding the observer's (i.e., Orgon's) self-love, and posing "a direct threat to his or her basic interests" (127). The rhetorical strategies that surround the play's *querelle* are subsequently analyzed in terms of parallels with the play's content. The accusers' portrayal of their own moral superiority calls for appropriate counter-measures on the part of the mimetic strategist (Molière, in this case). Hjort demonstrates three potential interactive scenarios: adventurism, integrationism, and populism. Each of these possibilities is illustrated in terms of the contemporaries' interpretations of the play and its moral values.

Chapter 5 attempts to identify the strategic dimensions of emotion in theatrical practice by comparing current theories of emotion with the attitudes emerging from two seventeenth century anti-theatrical pamphlets. The hypothesis developed by Hjort is that the long history of the theatre's association with social disorder springs from a (correct) identification of the theatre's emotional potential, especially its strategic possibility of integrating "audiences internally, thereby intensifying 'conflict in the broader society'" (190).

Chapter 6 explores the relation between strategic action and self-deception, illustrated in an account of the eighteenth century Danish writer Ludvig Holberg. Again the discussion is linked to current research on self-deception in philosophy and psychology. Intentional self-deception allows an agent to cling to a favoured

self-understanding and thus to avoid self-knowledge that could be detrimental to goals deemed advantageous. As the case of Holberg suggests, it may also be instrumental in the achievement of literary success.

There is much in these chapters to be admired, though they also raise questions. Why the important work on *Strategic Interaction* by Erving Goffman is not used does not become clear. And I would have expected references to Elias's work on civilization processes when there is so much talk of interdependence. Also I would object to the use of the term "pragmatics" for the kind of strategic interaction described by Hjort (where "sociology" would perhaps have been more appropriate). But these are minor points compared with the richness of insights and information offered by the book.

In a brilliant three-page conclusion Hjort restates her position: that strategic action is a recurrent and important feature of literary life. She takes up a middle ground between the doctrine of literary autonomy and poststructuralist globalizations of the strategic landscape. She makes short shrift of the latter's view that all actions are a matter of strategy. This is "by no means the virtuous unmaking of violence that it is alleged to be — on the contrary ... this kind of operation feeds social paranoia and encourages a furious discourse of accusation" (231). She adds, however, that much of what we have seen of it behaves according to the logic of a self-fulfilling prophecy; as is well known from both strategic studies and from everyday interactions, "the mere anticipation of hostility can foster strategic action that in turn fulfills the dire prophecy" (232). Literary theory, she maintains, has "already moved significantly in this direction" (232). The net result, however, is not greater understanding, nor greater freedom from oppression. With unusual clarity and brevity, Hjort points out that

if we do not wish to contribute to social violence, then we must systematically refuse a certain way of thinking. If what we desire most of all is war, then our theory should speak only of war ... if we in our theories construe all interaction as warfare, then we run the risk of ruling out the possibility of other dispositions and attitudes. (232)

There are lessons to be drawn from this book, not just lessons concerning literature, but some crucial ones about literary theory, too. (WILLIE VAN PEER, UTRECHT UNIVERSITY)

*ROBERT C. HOLUB. *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992. 224 + xii pp. US \$16.95 paper.

Robert Holub's *Crossing Borders* addresses contextual influences on the development of literary theory in Germany and the United States from the 1960s through the 1980s. As such, this is an ambitious book, for Holub undertakes to examine not only reception theory, poststructuralism, and deconstruction, but he

also undertakes to examine the reception of these theoretical positions in two vastly different countries. The work examines the American reception of reception theory, the fate of poststructuralism in Germany, and the politics of American deconstruction.

It was while working in both the United States and Germany in the early eighties that Holub first noticed great differences, between these two countries, in the current trends in literary theory. From this observation the first major issue of Holub's study emerged:

Anyone who has looked at and lived through contemporary trends in theory during the eighties in Germany and in the United States cannot help but notice an odd asymmetry. The writers, critics, and philosophers who have dominated the discourse here have been all but ignored in Germany, and vice versa. (viii)

At heart, here, is the issue of the appropriation of theory across national boundaries. With this in mind, Holub tackles the second major concern of this volume — political aspects of deconstruction in the United States. The central thrust of Holub's thesis is that, in its reception, theory is bound to context:

Although theory presents itself as abstract and applicable without regard to temporal and geographical boundaries, its appropriation and understanding were evidently bound to context. Despite the appeal to universal principles that all theoretical endeavors share, including those that abjure or call into question universals, they were apparently subject to nonuniversal criteria when it was a matter of their acceptance and evaluation in unfamiliar surroundings. (ix)

In the first part of *Crossing Borders*, "German Theory in the United States," Holub examines the American reception of reception theory; as Holub argues, this reception was practically non-existent. Most American scholars and theorists in this decade "completely disregarded contemporary developments in German literary theory" (6); any response tended to "obscure the breadth and depth of reception studies as a German phenomenon of the late sixties and early seventies" (7). During this period American and German academics faced similar challenges and questions concerning the rethinking of the profession of literary studies. Where in Germany reception theory grew out of political tendencies, and thus took on revolutionary tendencies, American developments in theory took place entirely in isolation from political debates. Holub argues that German theory tended to take into consideration historical and sociological factors, concerns that tended to be lost in "the overblown rhetoric of American poststructuralism." The disposition of "making the text disappear in theory" in American interpretive strategies caused reception theory to remain largely misunderstood (20). More interestingly, an examination of the differences in the reception of reception theory between the United States and Germany reveals that the dominant

tendencies in literary theory in the United States until 1980 were in fact a mere continuance of the hegemony of textual criticism. Under the guise of daring philosophical moves, "a fundamental adherence to the heritage of text-centred criticism and a continued neglect of nontextual factors, particularly history" (21), were still the norm in America.

In the second part of the book, Holub examines the fate of poststructuralism in Germany; or, as he puts it, the strange phenomenon that "it was obviously much easier for the French to cross the Atlantic than the Rhine" (40) in matters of theory. Holub puts forward a number of reasons for this. First, he finds that "poststructuralism has found no influential advocate or advocates in intellectual and theoretical circles in Germany." Second, he observes that "young post-structuralists, without strong backing and scholarly legitimacy, found it almost impossible to compete successfully for the few positions that became vacant" (41). The final reasons, he argues, have to do with differences in the philosophical tradition that poststructuralism had to be absorbed into. While Holub has chapters dealing with French theory and German scholarship and the influence of Foucault among the Germans, of most interest in this section are separate chapters on Peter Szondi, Manfred Frank, and Friedrich Kittler. Although none of these German theorists is wholly unknown in North America, Holub's examination of their importance in terms of the development of post-structuralism in Germany serve to familiarize the reader with thinkers frequently overlooked from the North American perspective. Holub's examination of works such as Frank's *Das individuelle Allgemeine* [The Individual General] and Kittler's *Aufschreibesysteme* [Discourse Networks], amongst others, serves to open up new avenues of theoretical exploration for the reader and shows that German poststructuralists had important things to add to the development of theory in the 1970s and 1980s.

The final section of *Crossing Borders* comprises two sizeable chapters, "Marxist Deconstruction" and "The Uncomfortable Heritage." The first of these chapters examines the difficulties faced by American scholars in the early 1980s as they attempted to merge or "articulate" philosophical deconstruction and oppositional political positions. The prime difficulty that Holub identifies is, as he has been arguing throughout the book, a contextual one. As he writes, "The oppositional impulse that deconstruction had demonstrated in the French context in 1968 was unsuited for the American academy, particularly at the start of the Reagan presidency" (142). Holub examines texts by three prominent American theorists, Michael Ryan, Michael Sprinker, and Gayatri Spivak, who attempt to articulate the possibility of a political deconstruction. With careful analysis, Holub demonstrates how problematical the endeavour of trying to merge leftist politics and deconstruction can be:

If the revolution for which we are expected to struggle has "no model" — as Spivak citing Derrida reminds us — if goals can be stated only obliquely or negatively, and if, finally

the elusion of authoritarian fictions may ultimately be only another illusion of metaphysics, then the practice of this theory is indeed a risky proposition. (147)

Holub is careful to link the failure of such theoretical positioning with the inhospitable politics of the Reagan era as well as with the lack of a strong philosophical tradition on American literary studies. While he criticizes quite heavily specific texts by Ryan, Sprinker, and Spivak, Holub is careful to separate criticism of the texts from criticism of the motivation behind these endeavours.

In the final chapter, Holub traces the demise of American deconstruction as a force in theory to "its uneasy relationship to politics" (149). Specifically, Holub examines the responses of prominent deconstructionists to the public revelation of Paul de Man's sympathetic stance in relation to National Socialism and of Heidegger's involvement with German politics of the thirties and the war. Here, Holub is primarily interested in understanding the relationship of politics to the philosophical writings of both de Man and Heidegger. Holub presents a forceful, and important, examination of the fallout from the de Man affair; this section should be required reading in any university theory course. With this examination, the abandonment of logic in favour of rhetoric, in the defence of de Man, is made quite clear. The ramifications of such argumentation are dangerous and in the end have clear political consequences. In an essay about a novel or some obscure metaphysical point such a tactic might be merely the occasion for a good laugh. But when the politics of anti-Semitism is treated with the same type of "logical" rigour that legitimated the mass murder of European Jewry, the matter is rather more pernicious in its ramifications.

Crossing Borders is a wide ranging book and the theoretical concerns at stake here are exceptionally difficult and at times controversial, making the possibilities of failure at the task large indeed. Holub presents a strong case for his argument that "there is always a political dimension to theory ... [and] that this dimension changes in different cultural contexts" (145). At his best, Holub is an exemplary explicator. He has the rare ability to make complex theoretical concerns understandable. At the same time, Holub presents a unique book on the state of German and American theory from the sixties through the eighties. With an admirable level of clarity and conciseness, Holub manages to argue his thesis across a whole series of borders. (CHRISTIAN RIEGEL, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*IRENA R. MAKARYK, ed. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993. 656 + xiv pp. Can \$150.00 cloth. Can \$39.95 paper.

A review of a work of literary theory raises questions about the *point d'appui* of the reviewer. My position is historicist, deriving from E. Panofsky and subsequently E.P. Thompson. Specifically relevant to this review is my role as

chair of the editorial board of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*. Thus, what follows is written with an insider's knowledge of the editorial problems of producing an encyclopedia and from a committed historicist position.

The Toronto encyclopedia is a whole divided into three parts, each part organised on an alphabetical principle. The first describes approaches to literature from Anglo-American feminist criticism to translation theory (though an essay on theory and pedagogy is placed out of order as the last entry); the next section gives biographical and descriptive accounts of scholars from M.H. Abrams to Alexander Zholkovsky (but extends the historical bounds of contemporaneity back to writers such as Freud and Nietzsche — but not Marx); finally, brief descriptions of critical terms run from Actant to White mythology. Rhetorical terms are only included when, like synecdoche, they have acquired special theoretical meanings. Following a French convention, the Toronto encyclopedia places the list of contents at the end. Or possibly the list of contents is a signifier of an absent index.

The editorial philosophy is that of the encyclopedists of the Enlightenment. The aim is towards the totalisation of knowledge organised ahistorically by alphabetical convention. An extensive system of cross-reference by asterisks leads from article to article in an ever-widening network, so that the user exploring new historicism will not get very far without recommendation to move across to entries on text, discourse, literature, signifying practice, Dilthey, Foucault, De Man, et cetera. Enlightenment ideology also has shaped the editor's desire for clarity in the entries. The arguments of a Derrida or a Lacan, for instance, stripped of their rhetorical sophistication appear as naked anatomies. In an attempt to carry scientific method further the editor has used citation indexes to select the wheat from the chaff. As a second phase, those who do not merit a primary entry are incorporated into appended bibliographies. The target reader is one who is about to enter, or who is in, the profession of literary criticism. That is, if you want to be a member of an English department in an anglophone university, here are, based on a statistical analysis, the names and words most often professionally employed.

From my viewpoint, a historicist analysis of this encyclopedia should seek to reveal not only the dominant ideology but also what is marginalised. Given the incorporation of literature into the title of the work, its marginalisation in the text is remarkable. It receives five columns out of some thirteen hundred — statistically about .05% of the encyclopedia, and less than 20% of the space given to feminism (to be scientific as the editor would wish). Nothing could more clearly indicate the difference in philosophy between Toronto's project and the so-called *Routledge Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism* (the claim to be encyclopedic was a publisher's gimmick which I repudiate). This work was introduced by a lead essay (not entry) on the idea of literature (in English) from which criticism

is separable as a historical phenomenon. The periodisation of literature, its formal generic properties, its production and reception through history, and the spread of literature in English from its original base in the British Isles were dominant ideas, to which the practice and theories of practice of critics were related.

The divide between the two encyclopedias has major implications both practical and ideological. Consider a reader interested in both the theory of theatre and theatrical literature. The names of Brecht and Brook, Shaw and Stanislavski readily appear in the Routledge guide, but merit no entry in the Toronto encyclopedia. Likewise, Shakespeare is given major status by Routledge, but the reader of the Toronto encyclopedia may only come across him by chance — for instance as a subject for new historicist theory. To enter Shakespeare by this method will be a process involving substantial indoctrination from a left-wing ideological perspective because that is the approach of many of the new historicist members of the literary-critical profession. This is an extraordinary historical slew, but which is not apparent because of the methodology of the Toronto encyclopedia — in this respect, the omission of Marx from the biographical section, in a work published after the revolutions of 1989, might be read as a sign of ideological concealment.

The editorial position of the Toronto encyclopedia is that theory is separable from literature as a subject of study, but theories enable criticism. Moreover, to enter the university profession of literary criticism you need to publish, and a new theory provides a means by which literary texts can be given a new critical reading. Thus, at my own university, students of feminist theory regularly inform me that we can now see that the Duchess of Malfi represents the oppressed position of woman in the Renaissance, and her brother Ferdinand represents the patriarchy. That is a reading which gets a professional result: a degree in English literature. The Toronto encyclopedia, accordingly, will be invaluable for this professional purpose.

But what is the status of the theory which is given the authority of encyclopedic status? The editor states that theory is an interdisciplinary study involving disciplines as diverse as philosophy and psychology, religion and linguistics (but not as diverse as history and theatre arts, I note). Since this is so, is there not something extremely dangerous in students of works of imagination and fiction making off with the tools of other trades without training in their use or the serious consideration of the difference between fact and fiction? There is not space in a brief review to argue the theoretical issues, but consider merely the admirably lucid discussion of the nature of patriarchy in the Toronto encyclopedia. It recounts, *a priori*, a theory of history in which men are empowered and women disempowered; how this leads to the dualisms of patriarchy between good / evil, master / slave; and cites as primary sources works relating to Marxist theory, Lacanian psychology, romantic poetry and Victorian prose fiction. Hence my students at Cardiff are quite correct in associating Webster's Ferdinand with

the patriarchy, because he is a man and he oppresses a woman. My problem is that if the encyclopedia carried an article on the well-known critical theory, anti-Semitism, the argumentative process would be exactly the same. An *a priori* reading of history has claimed to produce evidence of the pernicious effects of the international conspiracy of Jewry. Critical theorists like T.S. Eliot and Paul de Man have been concerned with the issue, and literature produces numerous examples (of the same authority as Webster's Ferdinand) in the works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Trollope, and even Socialist Shaw. As theories enabling the practice of literary criticism, you can make equivalent cases by this method for the androphobic use of the concept of patriarchy and for anti-Semitism, and on a statistical count I suspect that anti-Semitism is well ahead. My point is that works of imagination and fiction are the worst possible base for grounding totalising theories of history or philosophy, psychology or sociology, and as a historicist one of the first questions I would ask is what is the motivation of the theorist?

As a guide to what is going on in departments of literature, the Toronto encyclopedia is an excellent first point of reference; but I do not think literature can support the ideological claims made upon it. Toronto's .05% entry for literature may be about right. (MALCOLM KELSALL, UNIVERSITY OF WALES, CARDIFF)

*KENNETH M. CRAIG, Jr. *A Poetics of Jonah: Art in the Service of Ideology*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993. 221 + xiii pp. US \$34.95

This study is a significantly revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation, *The Poetics of the Book of Jonah: Toward an Understanding of Narrative Strategy* (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989). As its title states, it deals mainly with questions of poetics and of ideological (or theological) presentations as they are exemplified in the Book of Jonah (hereafter, Jonah), according to the author's reading of the Book.

Craig's volume contains several interesting readings; some methodological discussions; a proposal for the theology or ideology conveyed by the Book, which is presented together with an explanation of how this proposed theology or ideology is conveyed; and numerous illustrations of how a various array of literary techniques (e.g., characterization through dialogue) widely attested elsewhere in the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible are used in Jonah. Although not always compelling, the book is for the most part interesting, imaginative, and pleasant to read.

The main focus of the first eight chapters of Craig's book is on the issue of "how meaning gets produced" (9) in Jonah; on "how the Jonah text *made and makes* sense based on various interpretative operations" (5, Craig's italics; on this issue see below). Craig deals in these chapters with topics such as: the main

characteristics of the narrator; the role of the narrator in the process of "producing meaning"; the ways in which personages are characterized and how their inner lives are (re)presented; as well as with issues concerning the reading process in general, insofar as they are related to, or exemplified in, Jonah.

In this part of the study, the influence of M. Sternberg's approach to "The Poetics of Biblical Narrative" is clearly noticeable and well-acknowledged. (Neither Genette's levels and relationships nor semiotic models are used.) Regarding biblical poetry, Craig follows the path delineated by B. Hrushovski, and especially by A. Berlin. It is worth noting that Craig briefly mentions works such as those of F.M. Cross and D.L. Christensen on the so-called "Psalms of Jonah," but he does not actually interact with them. H.G.E. Watson's *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (Sheffield, 1984) is not mentioned at all. But, in sharp contrast, Craig polemicalizes against J.L. Kugel's *The Ideal of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven, 1981). As for the reading process, Craig remains within the limits of a "literary analysis," although he could have strengthened his argument with passing references to some empirical psychological data.

The focus of this study changes in the last chapter (144-65), both in content and in methodological models. Craig states that "the ultimate goal of this study is to move beyond matters of technique to the communication of values and attitudes from the text to the reader. Herein lies the real task of this narrative poetics: to discover how individual words, phrases, and syntactic arrangements function as means of evaluation" (144). Thus the focus of the presentation centers on questions such as how "art serves ideology" (165) and what kind of ideology (or theology) is conveyed by the Book. As for the latter, it is Craig's claim that "the author leaves no unambiguous dogma or decree. Just the mystery of divine compassion," and that in the ideologically most significant part of the Book, "the Lord stresses the supremacy of compassion and upsets the possibility of looking for a rational coherence of God's ways with the world" (165). The methodological model used in this chapter is derived from Uspensky's.

A minor drawback to this volume is its misplacement of some units within the formal outline governing the structure of the book. For example, the first chapter (4-18) is entitled "What is Poetics?" This chapter follows a rather strange outline: (1) General introduction, (2) Aristotle's Influence, (3) Jonah and Other Literary Traditions, and (4) The Text and Translation (11-18). Part 4, consisting as it does of a textual discussion of Jonah whose goal is to provide an English translation, does not fit the chapter heading. Another example: a major unit in the third chapter is entitled "The Characteristics of Narration in Jonah." This unit is organized according to the following subheadings: (a) Narration Confirming Dialogue; (b) Dialogue Confirming Narration, and (c) Chapter 4. First, a sub-unit entitled "Chapter 4" is an unexpected sibling of the two others. Second, although this sub-unit includes a reference to the fourth chapter of Jonah — albeit very brief — most of it deals with the technique of syntax-vocabulary-reversal, in

general and especially in Jonah. Significantly, most of the examples that Craig brings to support his argument at this point are taken from the first chapter of Jonah, rather than the fourth.

Craig also includes material of doubtful relevancy to the argument developed in the book. He devotes an entire chapter, twenty-six pages, to a (good) comparison between the English translation of Jonah given in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and that given in the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Craig is obviously correct when he states that the way in which a text is translated affects the characterization of the personae. But given that Craig's study is about the poetics and ideology of the *Hebrew Book of Jonah* (rather than of any Greek, Aramaic, English, or French translation of it), it is puzzling that he devotes an entire chapter to two *English* translations of this Book.

(Needless to say, the exclusive focus on the NRSV and RSV is unwarranted, even from the perspective of a modern English reader, and certainly from a scholarly point of view. These are "good" translations, but so are several other English translations. One cannot but wonder why, for instance, the translation of the text made by Sasson on the basis of a comprehensive linguistic, textual and grammatical analysis, is not presented. The more so, since Craig agrees with Sasson's conclusions in most instances.)

A more significant drawback to this study is implicit in its heuristic first question, namely "how the Jonah text *made* and *makes* sense based on various interpretative operations." One may add "to whom" it made or makes sense, but Craig does not do so. Craig certainly recognizes that readers make sense of texts through their reading process. Nevertheless, Craig does not seem to take into account that readers read a text from a specific social — in its most comprehensive meaning — context, from within a certain discourse or within certain discourses. Reading is contextual, and therefore, to some extent, group specific. If so, Craig's reconstruction of the "universal" poetics and ideological / theological message of Jonah cannot be considered "universal" and must be anchored with a specific historical group, be it ancient Israelite communities during the Persian period, or modern North-American. This is certainly not surprising, for "decontextualized" readings are not devoid of any context; rather they are anchored in the social discourse and context shared by the reader of the text and her or his audience.

The way in which this issue affects interpretation in Craig's book is clearly exemplified by one of the arguments that Craig develops:

Jonah and the Lord both come on stage with a complete absence of preliminaries, much like God in the very first chapter of Genesis. Who is the Lord and who is Jonah, the son of Amittai? Without any overt exposition, *the* reader can only piece it together based on the action and conversation itself.... Likewise, the Lord does eventually emerge as the creator God who apparently controls the natural order.... (63; emphasis mine)

But is it likely that ancient Israelite readers would have really wondered "who is the Lord" while reading the first verses of the book? Is it not more likely that they have socialized a certain understanding of who is the Lord, and that the reason that this understanding is not spelled out is that they live in a high-context society (as opposed to ours which tends to be much more low-context)? Moreover, is it not likely that the main communicative reason that the central human character bears the name "Jonah, the son of Amittai," rather than any other imaginable name, is to suggest to the (original) readers that they may identify, at least tentatively, this character with the character bearing the same name in the Book of Kings?

Craig constructs a reader who does not know who is God and who is Jonah at the beginning of the Book. Such a reader may help Craig to demonstrate how Jonah *makes* sense to him, and to those who follow similar reading strategies. This constructed reader, however, is very different from the most likely reader/s of Jonah in antiquity, and therefore s/he (i.e., Craig's reader) does not help to demonstrate how Jonah *made* sense to them.

A minor, but significant, drawback of this book is its relatively limited bibliographical horizon, especially concerning Jonah studies. To be sure, that some significant references would be omitted is to be expected in any work, but in this instance, some omissions are regrettable. For example, the author mentions (briefly) *The Jonah Complex* (Atlanta, 1981) by A. LaCocque and P.E. LaCocque; but their in-depth reworking of their previous book, namely, *Jonah: A Psycho-Religious Approach to the Prophet* (Columbia, 1990) is not mentioned even in the bibliography of Craig's 1993 volume. In addition, A. Rofé reaches relatively similar conclusions to those of Craig regarding the importance of chapter four and provides several insights that are relevant to the main discussion developed by Craig in chapter eight. But A. Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories* (1st English ed., Jerusalem, 1988) is not mentioned either. This omission is more noticeable since Craig refers in his preface to his stay in Israel during the formative period of this book.

The length of this review does not allow for a discussion of specific readings, nor particular conclusions. Thus, one should turn to the book as a whole. As such, and notwithstanding reservations and some limitations, it represents an important and creative contribution to the study of the Book of Jonah. This reviewer is grateful to the author for the book, and for the discussion about Jonah and biblical prophetic books that it encourages. (EHUD BEN ZVI, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*MARC SHELL. *Children of the Earth: Literature, Politics, and Nationhood*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. 253 + x pp. US \$49.00

In the preface to his most recent book, *Children of the Earth*, Marc Shell argues that "the universalist transformation of brother into other suggests that it is better to be an outsider in a particular kinship system where there are human kin and

are only humankind and animals" (x). But can this assertion be demonstrated? Shell seemingly believes so, or he would not have attempted to analyze the metaphorical and the literal implications of what he deems to be a universalist doctrine that "All men are my brothers." More specifically, his work explores concepts such as "siblinghood," consanguinity, and incest, and their effects on literature, history, and sociology. An interdisciplinary study, *Children of the Earth* exhibits both the strengths and the weaknesses of such an approach, and frequently forces history and politics to conform to theories that, while interesting, are better suited to literature than to the social sciences. Although his book presents a collection of sketches examining the tension between brotherhood and "otherhood" and linking these concepts to the evolution of the modern state, both its tendency toward generalization and its unconvincing promotion of a particularist doctrine over a universalist one undermine its thesis.

The strength of *Children of the Earth* lies in its ability to apply a new interpretative grid to well-known historical events. The text begins by underlining the conflict between the political importance of consanguinity in defining one's social position and the knowledge that, short of being a siamese twin, one can never know who is "brother" and who is "other." In the first two chapters, the author uses the metaphor of uncertain family relations to interpret several events in early American and Spanish history. He suggests that the United States was marked by the rift of a colony — a child — from its mother country (the War of Independence), and later by the union of two brother nations, the North and the South (the Civil War). The book's second chapter studies a period in Spanish history — the sixteenth century — during which the country employed barbaric measures to define who was "brother" and who was "other." While under three centuries of Muslim rule, Spain represented a bastion of enlightenment and tolerance, during the Catholic Inquisition it became a backwater of persecution. Shell further blackens the reputation of sixteenth-century Spain by making a tenuous link between the rise in the bullfight's popularity — a practice that helped to determine brother / human from other / animal — and the increased intolerance of the Christian population for Muslim and Jewish traditions (30-31). Following his analysis of the United States and Spain, the author develops his family metaphor to explain the birth of the modern state.

According to Shell, the transformation of feudal states into modern nations required a modification in the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects. Instead of being a father or mother to the people, the king or queen became their sibling. These arguments, however, vacillate far too easily between "historical fact" and theoretical metaphor. Indeed the thesis of the book's fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters have been influenced by the author's particular reading of *Hamlet* in which it is argued that:

The tragedy does not lie principally in the destruction of a regular nuclear family, or even of a larger "extended" family or nation, through the consequences of incest and kin

murder.... Rather, it lies in the destruction of siblinghood by the incest taboo that the nuclear family, or the larger extended family, presupposes and perhaps requires. (121)

Although all the world may be a stage, this reading of *Hamlet* may not be universal.

Shell's attempt to use literature to explain history meets with the same difficulties that would any study that used history to explain literature: it fails to respect the requirements of a specific discipline. His argument that in Elizabethan England the monarch overcame the incest taboo by refusing to marry and by striking a balance between "rejecting and reverencing consanguineous familial and national parenthood, [and] between the spiritual mysticism where everyone is one in God and the political fact where someone lords it over the other" (88) treats Elizabeth I as if she were a character in a work of fiction. Shell forces the Queen's behaviour to conform to his hypothesis with little regard for historical subtleties. This type of approach compels the reader and especially the literary critic to confront a nagging question: should we be more careful in interpreting historical figures and events than we would be in interpreting fiction? This question haunts the reader throughout Shell's analysis of the French Revolution, especially when the author cites the patriotic mission of the Terreur that saw many parents killed and children become orphans or children of the state. As wards of the state the orphans, Shell argues, were well prepared to become citizens of, or brothers in, the new Republic. However clever, this analysis seemingly whitewashes the atrocities committed during a horrific episode in French history. Ironically, Shell's historical analysis of universalism stands in contrast to a contemporary example of this doctrine.

The third chapter of *Children of the Earth* addresses Quebec's language laws, an exception that proves Shell's anti-universalist hypothesis. The author concludes that despite the various universalist language laws, the province has remained politically decent and linguistically tolerant. This chapter includes a semiotic analysis of Quebec's bilingual signs written in 1974 and in which Shell maintains that the "forked tongue" (56) in Quebec is one of commercialism, and that "Even more in a bilingual than a unilingual country, it is apparently not we who speak with each other about commodities, but rather ventriloquistic commodities that speak a unique and alien *Waresprache* through us" (57).

Although *Children of the Earth* contains fascinating interpretations of history, politics, sociology, and literature, its analysis of religion is sometimes deficient. In stark contrast to the originality of many of Shell's arguments stands his simplistic analysis of what he deems to be the universalist doctrine of Christianity. In the book's last four chapters the author, seeking to examine the moral and political implications of universalism, states that his thesis will be based upon the inaccurate but commonly held belief that Christianity is a universal religion and Judaism a particularist one (164). Despite Shell's plea for greater tolerance and understanding among people, in the case of Christianity, he fails

to distinguish between a religious philosophy and its varied cultural applications. Instead, he chooses extreme examples to describe the religion and resorts to statements such as "the soil was decidedly Christian where 'the mystical brotherhood' of the German SS flourished, and the Spanish ideology was Christian that encouraged the Catholic Inquisition" (195). In his fervour to discredit Christianity, the author forgets the religion's Judaic heritage.

Shell's criticism of several Christian practices reveals certain weaknesses in his knowledge of this religion and of Judaism. Preferring to view the "universalist" religion as having emerged from ancient Roman practices rather than from Judaic ones, he asserts that:

How some Christian thinkers converted the rules of the Old Testament against being cruel to animals into a licence to dominion over them is as interesting as how the Jewish injunction against physical cannibalism became an endorsement of spiritual cannibalism (The Eucharist) or how that against physical incest became an indorsement of spiritual incest (God as the Father of Himself). (166)

Shell conveniently fails to mention that dominion over the animals was granted to man by God in the first chapter of Genesis 28. Similarly, the author makes no mention of Lot's story, also in Genesis, and fails to address the issue of animal sacrifices. Surely this last practice cannot be considered a humane treatment of animals!

Marc Shell's *Children of the Earth* is a fascinating work in progress that addresses a variety of historical, sociological, and literary topics. His analysis of *Hamlet* and his brief reference to *Valkswagen Blues*, however, do not provide sufficient material upon which to base general theories of history and politics. Moreover, Shell's position would seem more credible if, instead of merely asserting the tolerance of particularist philosophies, he had examined the practice of these doctrines. Certainly contemporary examples of the treatment extended by particularist philosophies to those outside their covenant fail to support his argument. Although doctrines may vary in their philosophical regards for human kin and human kind, extremists in any camp are likely to resort to similar practices. (DANIELLE MILLER, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL)

*STEPHEN J. GREENBLATT. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. London: Routledge, 1992. 188 pp. US \$14.95 paper.

The enormous success of James Miller's recent biography of Michel Foucault suggests that there is a ready-made market for the reconstruction of postmodern theory as the public displacement of certain very private "fantasies and imaginative obsessions" (*The Passion of Michel Foucault* [1993], 5). In Miller's narrative the author, far from being dead, announces his presence most forcefully in those arguments that raise "the gravest doubts about the character of personal identity"

(6). The tables are turned and the surprisingly irreducible quality of personal identity is dramatically reasserted in Miller's account of Foucault as "a persistent and purposeful self, inhabiting one and the same body throughout his mortal life, more or less consistently accounting for his actions and attitudes to others as well as himself, and understanding his life as a teleologically structured quest" (7).

An obvious candidate for a similar biography is the leading figure of postmodernism's new historicism, Stephen Greenblatt, and in *Learning to Curse*, Greenblatt's putative biographer would find an invaluable aid. Invaluable because in this, the most autobiographical of Greenblatt's works, the author himself prepares the way for his resurrection.

Learning to Curse comprises eight essays on early modern culture, all previously published between 1976 and 1990, and an introductory essay especially written for the volume when it first appeared in 1990. The essays are meant, says Greenblatt, to "trace the uneven evolution of my critical methods and interests" (3). They may not tell "a unified story" but they do describe "an intellectual trajectory" (1). On first glance the essays could not appear more uneven or disparate. The topics they treat include linguistic colonialism, anti-Semitism, scatological rites, child-rearing, triumphal monuments, peasant rebellions, psychoanalysis, Ronald Reagan, Wolsey's hat, and museums. The texts and writers they discuss include *The Tempest*, Las Casas, Marx, *The Jew of Malta*, Luther, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, *King Lear*, Rev. Francis Wayland, Dürer's *Painter's Manual*, Sidney's *Arcadia*, *The Faerie Queene* Book V, 2 *Henry VI*, Freud, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Lyotard and Jameson. On closer examination, however, the essays do tell a more unified story than Greenblatt, somewhat disingenuously, seems willing to admit.

In their range and artistry, the essays are a source of great pleasure. They regularly delight by bringing what appears to be unpromising analogies to surprising and often illuminating conclusions. In this, Greenblatt makes it clear that to practise the kind of new historicism or cultural poetics he has in mind you have to be something of a poet. In making this particular selection of essays, he also makes it clear how much the poet in him has been preoccupied with one central theme — the loss and recovery of individual and / or cultural identity. While the earlier essays detail often with elegiac eloquence or tragic force how identity may be threatened or occluded, the later essays reveal an increasing sense of assurance as to how identity, not least the identity of the author, may be protected or reconstructed.

The book opens with a story of cultural loss. The title essay, "Learning to Curse" (1976), is a moral fable of early modern resistance to cultural relativism. The particular words that give the people of the new world their particular being are destroyed by the two rival positions on the nature of Indian speech. For the most part, the Europeans consider native languages either totally alien (gibberish) or wholly comprehensible (transparent). Thus "they either push the Indians

toward utter difference — and thus silence — or toward utter likeness — and thus the collapse of their own unique identity" (31). The "opacity" that would have enabled the Europeans to sustain the simultaneous perception of likeness and difference — "the very special perception we give to metaphor" (31) — is apparent ironically in Shakespeare's caricature of the colonized native, Caliban. For although Caliban claims to have learnt only to curse, the "rich, irreducible concreteness" of the verse the poet gives him "compels us to acknowledge the independence and integrity of Caliban's construction of reality" (31). Now, this opacity, the poetic quality that gives Caliban his identity, is at the heart of what Greenblatt means by resonance.

The book closes with a redefinition of new historicism in terms of resonance and wonder. The final essay, called "Resonance and Wonder" (1990), suggests that the new historicist is one who has the imagination to see Caliban's opacity in any material object. Objects so seen become "cultural artifacts," that is, concrete particulars that resonate not with universal truth but with the complex distinctiveness of their specific culture. By "resonance," Greenblatt explains talking of artifacts in museums, "I mean the power of the object displayed to reach beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which as metaphor or more simply as metonymy it may be taken by a viewer to stand" (170). Resonance means the power of cultural artifacts to sustain the simultaneous perception not only of likeness and difference but of a whole range of antinomies, intrinsic and extrinsic, textual and intertextual, past and present. Cultural resonance may be an end in itself, but to the extent that it defamiliarizes and revitalizes the world about us it produces wonder — more than anything else the power of the object "to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness" (170). While the pursuit of this wonderful sense of uniqueness, being, or identity is the defining purpose of new historicists — "continually to renew the marvelous at the heart of the resonant" (181) — it is also, we are surely meant to feel, the end that gives Greenblatt's intellectual life its own particular "teleological structure."

It should be apparent by now why *Learning to Curse* has done so well with critics as traditional as Frank Kermode and Anne Barton. Not only is there the very explicit turning away from theory that Paul Bove (*In the Wake of Theory* [1992], 18-19) identifies in the volume's penultimate essay, "Towards a Poetics of Culture" (1987), but, as I've tried to suggest, while Greenblatt's cultural artifacts turn out to be little more than a materialist displacement of Wimsatt's concrete universals, so his cultural poetics itself turns out to be little more than a similar displacement of the Coleridgean poetics that has animated so much of the mainstream of English studies since their institutionalization. Greenblatt is clearly not unaware of these continuities — it is he after all who draws attention to Wimsatt (1-3) — and nowhere is his desire for continuity itself and the

recovery of individual identity more evident than in the brilliant way his introductory essay silently rewrites Foucault's "What is an Author?"

For Foucault, in his classic essay of 1969, writing is a matter of "creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears" (*Contemporary Literary Criticism*, eds. Davis and Schleifer [1992], 264); for Greenblatt, it is the reverse — that is, a matter of producing the opacity out of which the writing subject's self is made. For Foucault, since writing is the freeplay of signifiers, since it has freed itself from both the writer and the signified, narrative as "something designed to ward off death" (264) is no longer viable. Playing out the role of Scheherazade not only fails to ward off death but it actually hastens the loss of identity; it precipitates "the effacement of the writing subject's individual characteristics" (264). Rather than respond directly to his former mentor, Greenblatt tells the story of his own sense of identity in which is embedded the seemingly transparent story of his Scheherazade-like father; in other words, he confronts theory with narrative. Constantly echoing the very phrasing of Foucault's essay, he tells how his father, Harry J. Greenblatt, was able to resist being absorbed into the identity of his parodic demonic cousin, J. Harry Greenblatt, by narrativizing the threat: "My father's narrative impulse was ... a strategic way of turning disappointment, anger, rivalry, and a sense of menace into comic pleasure, a way of re-establishing the self on the site of its threatened loss" (7). As Greenblatt deploys the memory of his father to recant, to abjure and to exorcize the Foucauldian melancholy of early new historicism (especially the ending of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* [1980] and the first version of "Invisible Bullets" [1981]), many readers will see *Learning to Curse* as the work of a prodigal son, and never more so than when he confesses in an aside: "I have been unpersuaded by arguments that the self has been radically deconstructed" (8). (PAUL STEVENS, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY)

*JUDITH RYAN. *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. 320 pp. US \$29.95

As Lothar Hönnighausen's reconstructive work on the Pre-Raphaelite presence in Faulkner's work has also demonstrated, one of the most useful accomplishments of books such as *The Vanishing Subject* is to remind the reader of the extensive network of traditions (some of them rather surprising) that sustain modernism, a movement whose proponents did much to suggest that their work had severed connections with all (or much) that came before. Throughout her analyses of canonical modernists such as James (Alice, William, and Henry), Stein, Kafka, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Joyce, Proust, Woolf and others, Ryan insists on the significance, as modernism's ancestral texts, of Walter Pater's *Renaissance* and *Marius the Epicurean* and of Huysmans's *A Rebours* (here referred to as *Against the Grain*, a disconcerting strategy in a text composed by a comparatist, as is the general reluctance to quote titles or excerpts

in the original). It is this intertextuality which appears to be at the core of Ryan's book, rather than the concern with empiricist psychology that the introduction announces, although the two are of course not unrelated.

I found that the chapter on Joyce elucidated his complex response to Pater particularly well; Ryan's insistence on visions, in *Portrait of the Artist*, shaped by empiricist psychology and therefore different in nature from the much-evoked epiphanies, is well-taken, as are her analyses of parodic allusions to Pater in *Ulysses*. Indeed, the book is strong in its detailed readings of individual works, including its attention to the roots of seminal modernist vocabulary. For instance, Ryan carefully unravels the meanings of "luminous," "lambent," and "diaphanous" in Joyce, tracing interactions to Pater and Woolf, but also Thomas Aquinas and Goethe. The book is less convincing in its conceptualization, nor is its focus of attention, despite a clear, if rather brief, introduction, sufficiently sustained. Emphasizing the influence of German thought on William James and other American intellectuals at the beginning of her book, Ryan fails to document the larger implications of this exchange, veering instead into a discussion of Huysmans and Pater. Given her thesis, Ryan includes surprisingly few American authors, compared to the many German speaking ones. Ryan may have wanted to demonstrate the overwhelming impact of German thought through this imbalance but nowhere is this question addressed. The conclusion proposes a revision of received notions of intertextuality, stating that "the complete picture [of intertextuality] ... needs to reproduce the complex paths by which multiple impulses weave their way through the works of many authors, sometimes disappearing for a while, only to reappear again in a different form."

The Vanishing Subject does not attempt to cover "the complete picture," but it does not provide a satisfactory outline either. In order to have done so, the book needed to address the question of canonicity and its production: as mentioned before, all of the authors included are canonical, and Ryan does not discuss her reasons for preferring certain authors over others. The lucidity of Ryan's writing is remarkable, eschewing theoretical jargon throughout, but such writing does not (or should not) preclude a documented awareness of relevant theoretical issues. Thus, only three of the fifteen chapters on individual authors are devoted to women, despite extensive recent work recovering neglected women modernists. Ryan may have decided that gender was not a central issue in her discussions, but can one really afford to ignore the question to the extent in which it happens in this book? Moreover, Ryan's selections tend to favour "high" modernism, as well as prose and poetry; what about the impact of the developments she describes on popular genres and writers?

The Vanishing Subject is an inspiring book because it raises many questions about the movement with which it is concerned; it would have been an even more satisfactory work, if it had tackled itself some of these questions more fully. (EVA-MARIE KRÖLLER, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA)

* ANTHONY PURDY, ed. *Literature and the Body*. Amsterdam-Atlanta GA: Rodopi, 1993. 211 pp. US \$41.00

I never cease to be amazed at how gingerly postmodern critics "handle" the body. If anything in our relativistic and uncertain world is, to each of us individually, tangible, actually in existence, corporeal, always already constructed, it is our own separate bodies, and yet, in this arm / wing / branch of criticism, nothing is less corporeal than those bodies on or through which sign systems are written: "the most urgent task for us as critics is to learn how to read 'the body,'" claims the editor (5). As Terry Eagleton puts it, "The current North American fetishism of the body, all the way from Jane Fonda to Michel Foucault, is ... in the manner of a Freudian fetish, a standing-in for something elusively absent" (*TLS* 7/15/94: 3). "If you don't take care of your body, where will you live?" (says a sports clinic graffito, presumably speaking for Jane Fonda). But this collection is very much at the Foucault end of that spectrum, and what seems most "elusively absent" is the corporeal.

There is more food for the cannibal imagination in, for instance, Margaret Atwood's musings on "The Female Body": "this topic ... this capacious topic ... I get up in the morning. My topic feels like hell ... my controversial topic, my limping topic ... scuttling along the sidewalk as if it were flesh and blood" (*Good Bones*, 39-40), than from any of the essays in this collection. To say this is not to reproach the editor for his assumptions, inevitable given the present state of bodies as matters for thought, but just to meditate on the ironies of intellectual history which have made "bodies," the one thing of all the things in the world that each of us implicitly believes to be concrete, into such a mighty corpus of abstractly "constructed subjects."

Kate Fillion, reviewing *Minding the Body: Women Writers on Body and Soul* (*Globe and Mail* July 2, 1994), describes that work as "a refreshing alternative to the talking-head theorists who dominate the literature on body image." *Minding the Body*, to appropriate that inevitably punning title, might (in both senses) catch the flavour of Purdy's collection better than the rather anodyne title made obligatory by the format of the Rodopi series: *Literature and X* ("Food," "Travel," and four others have already appeared; "Money" is pending).

Patricia Smart, in the opening essay — no "talking-head theorist" she! — matter-of-factly distinguishes "the body" from "my body," with almost Atwoodian precision and admirable clarity. Her topic is the visibly corporeal metaphors of the "feminist grotesque," as deployed for satiric ends in works by Jana Sterbak (whose sculpture, including the notorious "Vanitas: Flesh Dress," replaces the [absent] female body by its coverings or other metonymic associations) and by Louky Bersianik, who says (following Irigaray), "L'histoire de l'humanité ... est ... un grand roman policier ... plein de meurtres anonymes

où l'on a fait disparaître les corps" (18-19). Thus the "absent [female] body" becomes, for both artists, and for the critic as well, a feminist political trope.

Each of the next four essays looks back on, or over at, another political-cultural struggle. Ray Morrow, discussing the "body" of an anachronistic pre-modern Latino dictator, the eponymous hero of García Márquez's *Autumn of the Patriarch*, calls upon Bakhtin, Foucault, and Lyotard to be the patron saints of his inquiries. García Márquez dissects the patriarchal body of the Powerful Male, with a carnivalesque "realism" more grotesque than magical. Morrow's choice of the male and dominating body is atypical for body studies; as in Smart and in the next three essays, "the body in question" is more usually gendered female, because seen as victimized and powerless: children (Jo-Ann Wallace), animals (Susan Hamilton), women (Nasrin Rahimieh).

The next two essays concentrate on social criticism of the Victorians with a strong Cultural Studies flavour. Jo-Ann Wallace on "The Child's Body in the Mid-Victorian School Novel" (*Jane Eyre* — an unusual choice, as she admits — and *Tom Brown's Schooldays*) calls upon Johannes Fabian (for the concept of allochronism), Foucault again, and Philippe Ariès, for some more familiar constructions of childhood. Susan Hamilton, on "Pets and Scientific Subjects: Constructions of the Animal Body in Victorian Anti-Vivisection Periodicals," discusses the tropes of the discourse of anti-vivisection, in which the claims of domestic animals (pets in particular), upon our construction of ourselves as humane clash with the forceful — but plainly incompatible — humanitarian claims for vivisection, seen as essential to medical progress.

Nasrin Rahimieh links the (re-)veiling of women in present-day Iran with a subversively creative and politically revolutionary undercurrent in Iranian women's writing. The veil is neatly interpreted as providing three levels of separation (and thus of potential transgression) between women and Society (read: men): visual, spatial, ethical. But the veiled women of Iran, supposedly secluded, are not only participating in public political demonstrations, but, astonishingly, are shrouding, under those same veils, a revolutionary flourishing of female writing. This is fascinating social commentary as well as an introduction to some intriguing writers — but a closer reading of their (to judge by the quotations given) imaginative, highly fantastic texts, with strong elements of metamorphic folk tales, might strengthen and clarify our sense of their obliquely revolutionary nature.

To find leverage for discussing Rohinton Mistry, Valerie Narayana opens a debate with Susan Sontag on "illness as metaphor," agreeing with her on the "constructed" nature of attitudes to disease (127), but recasting her own priorities into the curbing of "health as metaphor." "The stigmatization of the diseased body has its origins in the aestheticization of the healthy body" as the editor puts it (9). Narayana's evident appreciation of Mistry isn't really enhanced by the deployment of Sontag: either a better mode of entry into his text, or else a better

example for illustrating the perceived limitations in Sontag's approach, seems to be called for.

A vigorous Kristevan reading of Bataille's transgressiveness, moving freely among his works to reach a complex Oedipal interpretation of *Ma mère*, his posthumous novel of 1966, is Maryline Lukacher's contribution. Her argument is reinforced by a neatly revelatory series of puns and an intertextual account of Bataille's drawing upon Ernst Jünger's *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (*La guerre, notre mère*), which, together, make this essay the most intriguing and satisfying "close reading" in the collection.

Stephen Slemmon, not as lucid as he usually is, seems trapped in his own vocabulary, to the point of making even cannibalism into an abstraction, a concept "both paradigmatic and deferred" and forcing him into "generalizing an absence" (164; his italics). He quotes Peter Hulme, who calls cannibalism "the central regulating mechanism of colonial discourse" (175); is this not a *little* overstated? Fabian's allochronism (also employed by Jo-Ann Wallace) plus De Certeau's view of cannibalism as "an *economy of speech*, in which the body is the price" (166), push Slemmon towards an argument not only abstract, but strained. Empire, seen figuratively as cannibalising the Colony, is immediately made literal, as Empire projects its own "cannibalism" onto the colonial Others (167) — a striking example of the slippage from "actual / concrete" to "discursive / abstract" that marks a great deal of this book. If the colonizers always address "cannibalism" indirectly, as befits such an "unfathomable enigma," the postcolonials, fighting back, intensify the dialectic by not representing cannibalism directly either. Slemmon identifies three postcolonial rhetorical strategies for this indirection: "tropic reversal" (Galeano and Nandan), "tropic overdetermination" (Keri Hulme), and "a tropic of fragmentation," exemplified in the "cannibal punning" of Patrick White's *A Fringe of Leaves* (171-73). This is an intelligent essay, but one, as Slemmon himself admits, still "in progress," needing one more rewrite for the clarity which is prerequisite to carrying conviction.

The concluding essay, by Purdy and Bridget Elliott, is genuinely and delightfully interdisciplinary. It provides a "reading" of Peter Greenaway's films in terms of the semiotic parallels of body-systems and building-systems, with "both buildings and bodies participat[ing] in other systems, too..." (199), and both moving "through time ... [and] space ... [structured by] gravity" (200). Greenaway's abundantly eclectic visual quotations allow him, he says, the "opportunity to play with taxonomies..." (203). For Greenaway, bodies (like totemic animals) are *good to think with*. In the manner of a comic "Lévi-Straussian 'bricoleur'," Greenaway deploys "pattern ... as a prosthetic device, a comic aid to thought..." (205). An enlightening and challenging "reading" of this brilliantly enigmatic film-maker, for whom "bodies" share the center of the screen with other kinds of patterning, architectural, literary, painterly, grotesque

(no "deferral" of the cannibal image for Greenaway!), in order to be, cinematically, embodied.

This collection, while stimulating in its parts, provides, as a whole, a somewhat narrow angle on "this capacious topic," for although its methodologies are, as the editor claims, quite varied, they are all very current ones, based on suppositions about the "grotesque, constructed body" found largely in Foucault and Bakhtin. No outdated perspectives on "Minding the Body" need apply, let alone any counter-arguments for doing it in some as yet non-current way: this book is not, finally, quite as "heterogeneous" as it thinks it is (7). (PATRICIA MERIVALE, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA)

*NORMAN SIMMS. *Writers from the South Pacific: A Bio-Bibliographic Encyclopedia*. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1991. 184 pp. US \$35.00 cloth. US \$17.00 paper.

What a frustrating experience this book is. Neither bio-bibliographic, nor critical, nor encyclopedic, *Writers from the South Pacific (WSP)* is a text in search of both form and purpose. Based on the twin assumptions that writing in new literatures presents its own problems (and therefore demands its own treatment) and that traditional bio-bibliographies are little better than "dead" lists, this work sets out to provide a "living" list of ... what? We are never entirely sure.

Simms's rambling introduction retraces the long familiar linguistic, economic, and cultural demons facing writers in new literatures. He concludes that the unique process of literary creation in the postcolonial world requires innovative methods of criticism. A well-known point well-taken, but his answer to the challenge is an amorphous reaction to the construction of research tools. Simms states that a Western-style bio-bibliography, with its reliance on the so-called "facts" of a writer's life and career, would be inappropriate when applied to the corpus of South Pacific writing. It would imply "false dichotomies and simplistic categories of social and intellectual organization," forcing us to "lose touch with the dynamic and fluid interplay of social and imaginative experiences inherent in the development of each of the authors."

Simms's manifesto suggests he will clear the slate to produce a new and functional tool. But what he presents is a shapeless marriage of two existing types of bio-bibliography: one, along the lines of Herdeck's *Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical-Critical Encyclopedia* and the other, resembling *Something About the Author* (the bio-bibliographic encyclopedia of children's authors published by Gale, which includes long interview-style entries). Although the back-cover blurb of *WSP* boasts entries on some 2000 authors, the index actually contains fewer than 500. Of these existing entries, 32 are marked with an asterisk, indicating "co-operating" authors. In other words, only 7% of the entries overtly deal with cultural and individual difference. Furthermore, those few

entries are very disproportionately long, when compared to the rest. As a result, they stand out as irritations in a text that graphically resembles any other encyclopedia.

WSP's failure to find a coherent form is paralleled by its failure to find a cultural point of view. For all his sensitivity toward new writing, Simms situates his primary entry on the Aboriginal poet under her colonial name, "Kath Walker," and the cross-listing as "Oodgeroo Noonuccal," when she herself has cast off the colonial name. This practice would be analogous to including a primary entry on Kenyan novelist, James Ngugi, and a cross-listing to Ngugi wa' Thiongo. Worse yet, the patronizing, patriarchal introduction to the Walker entry is enough to turn anyone's hair white: "Walker, Kath or Oodgeroo Noonuccal, is an elderly Australian Aboriginal woman born in 1920 who is perhaps the best known literary poet amongst her people with four books to her credit." Compare this to the entry on Colin Johnson "whose tribal name is Bibbulmun, [and who] is an Australian Aborigine born in 1938." Whether or not Johnson is "perhaps" a good writer, at least he is not a middle-aged Aboriginal gentleman.

Aside from its generic and cultural ambivalence, the usefulness of *WSP* is severely limited by its lack of balance and focus. Simms readily admits the imbalance in this text, but never makes clear the reasons for his apparently random choice of authors. However, a close look at the entries reveals that they are mainly concerned with novelists, or with those authors whose works have been published in easily accessible anthologies and collections. The wealth of South Pacific writing available in literary magazines (*except* those edited in New Zealand, or in the eastern Pacific) and in newspapers is all but absent. Even when periodical publications are mentioned, no titles or references guide the reader to the author's work. For instance, Harry Iwiti is vaguely listed as publishing in *Purua*, whereas Loujaya Kouza, whose many publications have appeared in Papua New Guinea literary journals, is not listed at all. Even more perplexing is the contrast between the three entire lines devoted to Tom Sine, whose literary career consists of winning the Port Moresby Real Estate prize for the retelling of a single legend into English and the woefully inadequate eight lines devoted to the prolific career of novelist-poet-dramatist, Russell Soaba.

This lack of balance is most evident in the 32 "interviews" which suggest, by representation, that Cook Islands writers (8 of them) and Singapore writers (6) are either more prolific, more interesting, or perhaps more co-operative than others. One must also wonder if this imbalance will persist into further editions, with the entries of co-operating authors like Vanessa Griffin (6 pages) and Pio Manoa (11 pages) overwhelming those of such non-co-operating authors as Kath Walker (1 paragraph), Albert Wendt (1 paragraph), and Epili [*sic*] Hau'ofa (1 paragraph). The fact that interviews, biographies, bibliographies, reviews and articles published by other scholars abound for these well-known writers and

others suggests that Simms has not, as Three Continents advertises, "gathered what is gatherable," but that he should.

The skewed balance in *WSP*'s entries is compounded by its complete lack of focus. *WSP* contains a catholic sampling of writers from Polynesia to Melanesia, as well as a few more from Malaysia, Singapore and Aboriginal Australia. Simms never defines who South Pacific writers are, but their number apparently includes John Kolia, an Australian who has taken PNG citizenship. On the other hand, it excludes Polynesian writers from Hawaii.

Simms might have defined his field and provided focus for the text with any number of cohesive strategies: among them, generic, national, or regional. Instead, the alphabetical listing of authors by surname only gives no indication of the literary, political, or cultural features of South Pacific writing. Nor does it give any indication of its history. In fact, the listing by names alone implies that writing in the South Pacific is a homogenous experience. The brief appendix of authors by nation (177 ff.) does nothing to alter this impression.

Not only would some careful editorial advice from Three Continents have obviated the deficiencies just mentioned, but it might have spared readers the two completely different entries on Tawali Kumalau and the typographical errors that pepper both text and index. Also it might have offered readers an index of Simms's sources and a fair and complete list of works for further reading.

Is there anything to salvage here? Simms certainly has the basis for a strong collection of interviews. These personal accounts, often by lesser-known writers, are valuable in their insights and in their thematic unity. Because they were gathered regionally with the assistance of local authors, they also contribute to South Pacific literary history. Should they be organized in a more representative fashion and focussed on South Pacific *island* literatures, they could accomplish the "intensive probing of a few individuals, representing a range of commitments and degrees of achievements" that Simms sets out to accomplish with *WSP*.

Furthermore, Simms's analysis of the trends he noticed while gathering this data is clearly and cogently expressed on pp. 16-28. He has planted there the seeds for further criticism of South Pacific texts in his observations regarding the importance of literary institutions; the interplay between writing and scholarship, writing and the oral tradition; language choice; and the role of the church in writing. That his bio-bibliographic exercise led him to comment on the South Pacific literary system is proof enough of the value of the attempt.

Beyond this, the project itself has merit. An up-to-date, comprehensive bibliography of South Pacific writing is clearly overdue. Such a reference tool could certainly build on the excellent foundations provided by the work of bibliographers like Esther Williams, Chakravarti and Kais, Vebeke Stenderup, and others. However, it would be an enormous undertaking, probably best managed with a team of contributors under a general editorship. The task is simply too large for one person. (EVELYN ELLERMAN, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)