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Reviews of recent publications

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Book Reviews

Verena Andermatt Conley, ed. *Rethinking Technologies*. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Pp. xv + 248.

This collection is a product of the stimulating Miami Theory Collective, an interdisciplinary enterprise which has raised the status of the Department of French and Italian at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, to an eminence rivaled only, among French programs at liberal arts colleges, by Dartmouth. This volume has a stellar cast of contributors. One might claim that it found its initial impetus in the inspiration of the eponymous lead essay (first published 1953) in Martin Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (3-35; translated and introduced by William Lovitt for Garland Publishing in 1977). Starting with two etymological meanings of "technology" from the Greek *techné*, meaning both "the activities and the skills of the craftsman" and "the arts of the mind and the fine arts" (13), Heidegger argues for the urgency of reuniting "the two cultures" of art on the one hand, and industry, science, and technology on the other. An industrial exploitation which sees externality only as a "standing reserve" (*Bestand*) for its operations voids even objects of their distinctiveness. This viewpoint makes objects appear not merely dead but as existing only in order to be consumed. Heidegger seeks to persuade humans to cease being passive consumers in order to become active mediators between the two extremes of art and science. Compare the slogan of animal rights activists: "Meat thinks."

The same humanist consciousness, he believes, must contain both the *causa efficiens*, or instrumentality, and the *causa finalis*, or telos, as God's consciousness contains both Mephistophilis and redemption. To challenge the self-contained ordering and arranging activities of the instrumental by providing a context larger than exploitation will lead to revealing and thus to freedom. But technology always threatens to re-engulf revealing by relimiting its vision to ordering. Only the poetic revealing of the fine arts may question such a possibility in a "decisive confrontation" (35).

Ingrid Scheibler's "Heidegger and the Rhetoric of Submission: Technology and Passivity" (115-39) glosses Heidegger's essay and partially defends it against the natural question of why we should take this "Nazi

philosopher" seriously. She says that by focusing on the metaphoric potential of language, Heidegger helps free us from habitual modes of representation and create a new relationship of humans to the world. She admits that Heidegger's rhetoric of submission and dependence could easily be collapsed into his support of the fascists, but she tries to sift out the discrete, abstract philosophical significance of Heidegger's corrective to an exploitive view of nature.

Verena Conley's lucid, keenly intelligent, and unobtrusive preface counters the tendency in popular culture to polarize evaluations of technology in quasi-theological terms as either liberation or imprisonment, salvation or damnation. In an age of population explosion and spoliation of the environment we must seek a fruitful alliance of science with the humanities. As the technological age moves us inexorably from *bricolage* or recombination to transformation, we must guide the latter with an overview that makes people count, rather than submit to *techné*, "a purposiveness without purpose" (Nancy 41).

To my mind, Jean-Luc Nancy's "War, Law, Sovereignty—*Techné*" (28-58) is the most impressive essay in the volume. Police actions are justified as enforcing the laws of a state internally; analogously, war in principle enforces the public good of humanity internationally. Thus it is redundant to speak of a "just war" in principle, or of a "dirty war" in fact, since during the exercise of war the rights of the individual are sacrificed to the rights of a collectivity. The term "powers" used to refer to nation states implies that they possess the prerogative of applying their force beyond their own borders. Since from the perspective of an individual power, the loss of any war is an injustice, new wars will always be necessary to make up for former lost wars (a dynamic illustrated in the first monument of French literature, *La Chanson de Roland*). New weapons often ensure triumph, but they inevitably violate conventions of heroism or humanitarianism, or both (from the coward's weapon of the longbow to the firestorms that destroyed most of the larger cities of Japan during World War II). Peace, "the supreme absence of distinction," and sovereignty, "the incandescence of the exception" (47), are incompatible. Under our present political systems, peace can exist only as an artifact of empire—the Pax Romana or the Pax Americana. Nancy concludes by trying to think through "a justice that would be neither the *telos* of a history nor the endowment of a sovereignty" (53). He frames this effort in a *ecotechnics* where means and ends combine. The place of sovereignty must become vacated in order to reconcile the rights of property and of social welfare.

In "Age of Paranoia" (92-114), Teresa Brennan develops the issue of the relationship between the physical cosmos and technological mastery. She analyzes this relationship in terms of psychopathology—for example, polluting the environment is compared to poisoning the frustrating "bad breast" in Melanie Klein's psychoanalysis. Ascribing our own unrecog-

nized desire for control to our surroundings, we generate hallucinations that make the ego lose its bearings. These fantasies in turn transform the environment and make us perceive it differently. Whether psychoanalysis provides as good a fit as do sociology and economics for analyzing our relationship to the environment must be left to the reader to decide. I fear that narrativizing our self-destructive tendencies as a family romance may obscure our need to overcome them otherwise than through individual introspection.

Of the essays in Parts III and IV of this volume, "Technology and the Arts," the most noteworthy are by Françoise Gaillard, N. Katherine Hayles, and Alberto Moreiras. In various ways, they denounce the pernicious euphoria of pseudo-solutions to our environmental crisis through a retreat to the ostensibly self-contained artistic worlds of post-modernism or of cyberspace. These modes provide for the privileged, Hayles trenchantly remarks, illusory escape from the environment that we have poisoned and ruined.

Verena Andermatt Conley proposes a social solution to environmental destruction in her essay on "Eco-Subjects" (77-91), subsequently expanded in her book at Routledge (1994). The triumph of one sovereignty's victory in the Gulf War has been privileged over the collective defeat of massive environmental damage there. An expert on Hélène Cixous, Conley integrates Cixous' eco-feminism with other, non-gender-bound approaches in support of Paul Virilio's claim that "the only struggle worth fighting . . . is a truly ecological struggle" (*Défense populaire et luttes écologiques*, Galilée, 1978). "The question is . . . how to cope with the threat while combining scientific and humanistic aspects of becoming to provide an opening to the future" (88). The starting point is to oppose hegemony with tact and diversity (90). Although modestly embedded in the middle of her volume, Conley's essay provides an effective conclusion for the whole. Through her statements and through collecting the essays, she opens up a space where interdisciplinarity and social responsibility can intersect.

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Vincent B. Leitch. *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992. Pp. 186.

With the words "The past vexes and contours our future," Leitch closes the preface to his recent work, initiating his own project of "poststructuralist cultural critique." What Leitch launches is a poststructuralist critique of

the culture of criticism, with clear acknowledgment of the decades-long stranglehold of formalism on that culture. The new criticism/formalism, Leitch argues, has become immortalized (after its death in the 1960s) as "normal" criticism, a practice Leitch would like to see undone by the radical change that a cultural criticism inspired by poststructuralism can produce. Leitch brings before our eyes once more a pronouncement by W. P. Blackmur as an example of the kind of formalist aesthetics with which we are so woefully familiar: "criticism must be concerned, first and last—whatever comes between—with the poem as it is read and as what it represents is felt." To this, Leitch counters his work as an opposing manifesto, avowing that the nature of his writing here, different from his earlier history of American criticism, is decidedly polemical and that only a "self-deluding aesthetic dogmatism" like that of the new criticism could restrict the critic to studying literature for its own sake.

Leitch outlines the key features of his work by reiterating that his is an argument against "current influential contending accounts of important issues and problems." He will use the work of a number of poststructuralists without hesitating to criticize and open to view their shortcomings as he constructs his own platforms on a range of theoretical problems including authorship, poetic discourse, literary genre, minority literatures, and cultural studies centers like the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Leitch's purpose is to create a hybrid, an enactment of a blend of various poststructuralisms.

There are problems, however, with both Leitch's methods and his material. For example, a chapter which should have been, if we accept Leitch's own position, among his strongest, is, in my view, his weakest. Leitch writes at the beginning of "Pluralizing Poetics" that his reason for offering a chapter on minority literatures and theories is because his own understanding of poetics stems from this base; and it is clear to me that his instincts are certainly in the right place when he opens the chapter by acknowledging the limited, Christian, Eurocentric view of Northrop Frye's ambitious project to describe a universal model of poetics for all (read white male) literature. Yet Leitch includes only a small section in this chapter on women's literature, sidestepping a major argument about women's literature as minority literature and ignoring a large body of feminist theory and criticism that has brought about significant change in society as well as in the academy.

While Leitch is kinder to African American theory and criticism, he fails to explore adequately the pressing problem of subjectivity in minority literature and theory and intones instead Gayatri Spivak's poststructuralist view of subaltern "subject positions" as a way of drawing a conclusion few minority theorists, or feminist theorists, for that matter, would agree to without much fuller discussion, if ever. In a later chapter, for example, the postcolonial critic Edward Said remains on target in

Leitch's view as long as he stays within a Foucauldian embrace framing his thoughts on discourse, power, and knowledge. But when Said feels the sting of being an "other" himself, he "backtracks from Foucauldian poststructuralist positions to humanistic existential and empirical stances where he has recourse to the dubious concept of 'authentic experience.'" Isn't it just a bit pretentious of Leitch to fault a displaced Palestinian for his passion about his experience? Similarly, feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar are faulted for "rush[ing] in to retrieve material reality," specifically the reality of women's oppression as mirrored in women's writing. This, Leitch continues, results in a view of literature as vulgar mimeticism. Indeed, what weaknesses exist in Gilbert and Gubar's early work have found numerous correctives in the later work of feminist theorists who have employed a variety of approaches to textual studies which seek a better fit of literary theory and political commitment to social change for equality and justice.

Furthermore, while his remarks on the views of Deleuze and Guattari regarding minority literature and de Certeau on marginality are interesting, Leitch never brings them to bear on the context of minority literatures and theories in a way that advances our knowledge of these very important concerns. I applaud Leitch's conclusion to the chapter that we should be able to talk "of differences without dominations" in an ideal world, but I regret that he has done so little in this chapter to move poststructuralist cultural theory one step closer to that point.

The problems with Leitch's work are not to be found, though, in just one chapter. A matter of style bothered me throughout as I read. Leitch's effort to model rhetorically the poststructuralist position(s) he adopts dips into the ridiculous when he overdoes his tendency to catalog. He announces that this stylistic feature is designed to model how "poststructuralism tends to construe entities as entangled in complicated networks." But one example of this tendency can demonstrate just how unreadable spots of Leitch's text become:

Typically institutions explain events, normalize behavior, regulate values, promote efficiency, package information, organize interests, centralize authority, hierarchize constituents, erect borders, prescribe pleasure, license play . . .

The sentence is still not finished, but need I go on?

Another issue that I would take up in closing is the slippage in what Leitch employs as a key term: "regimes of reason," derived from Foucault's "regimes of truth." This is a term Leitch variously identifies with ideology, culture, and society, but due to the fact that he uses the more familiar terms almost as much, his efforts to install it as a new term to describe differently an old reality fail. Even when Leitch attempts to "deconstruct"

the term as “regimes of (un)reason,” I am bothered by a facile slippage into a Manichaean either/or which suggests just the sort of totality Leitch works so feverishly to avoid.

Since Leitch’s book is clearly not written with a neophyte audience in mind—last names are used everywhere to identify theorists with whom Leitch contends, and some would be obscure to readers outside of the current critical conversation—readers who do seem to be his intended audience, those conversant with the theories and theorists, criticisms and critics that Leitch examines, must ask themselves what new this work has to offer. We know about the foundations of the present in formalism, about conflicted author positions, about the politics of a white male canon, about the conflicted subjectivity of poststructuralism, and about the emerging significance of cultural theory/cultural studies. If this is all Leitch has to offer us, then this reader, as much as I might agree with his motives, would have to argue that, in sharp contrast to the enormously valuable information Leitch offers in *American Literary Criticism from the Thirties to the Eighties*, here I didn’t learn much.

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Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit. *Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Rothko, Resnais*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993. Pp. 229.

Bersani and Dutoit take their theoretical point of departure from a short text on painting entitled “Three Dialogues,” where, in a highly stylized exchange with Georges Duthuit, Samuel Beckett makes his celebrated statement that “to be an artist is to fail.” Among the very few critics attentive to both the letter and the spirit of this text, they stress that the “failure” or “impoverishment” on which Beckett’s understanding of art is based has little if anything to do with a work’s content or “occasion” and virtually everything to do with a certain formal or representational incapacitation. They then articulate this notion as “inhibited reading” in Beckett’s own drama and fiction, as “blocked vision” in the painting of Mark Rothko, and as “stalled movement” in the films of Alain Resnais. More than a stimulating contribution to aesthetic theory, however, this book attempts to delineate the political thrust of works of art whose very failure to “redeem” their purported object constitutes an act of resistance to “the complacency of a culture that expects art to reinforce its moral and epistemological authority” (8).

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Nowhere is such complacency more evident than in the history of Beckett criticism. Bersani and Dutoit quote a distressingly long list of

critics, including Cavell and Adorno, for whom Beckett's work appears to represent little more than an especially poignant portrayal of existential pathos. For the authors, this view is doubly reductive: "On the one hand, art is reduced to a kind of superior patching function and is enslaved to those very materials to which it presumably imparts value; on the other, the catastrophes of individual experience and of social history matter much less (thereby making active reform and resistance less imperative) if they are somehow 'understood' and compensated for in art" (3-4). The challenge in reading Beckett—to say nothing yet of Rothko or Resnais—consists, therefore, in showing how his work continually disrupts the traditional relation between "representer and representee" and by extension between the work of art and its consumer, that is, how it calls into question the very frame upon which redemptive meaning is predicated. In sustained and thoughtful interpretations of *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, *How It Is*, and *Company*, Bersani and Dutoit more than meet this challenge. Not content, for example, merely to restate the suspension of meaning in the plays, they convincingly claim that by virtue of this suspension the plays function as an allegory of their own reception. Thus, the real drama of *Waiting for Godot* or *Endgame* lies not so much on the stage as in the very articulation of a "space" that makes theatrical framing possible, of an intersubjective "relationality" more fundamental than either the separation or the identification of spectator and protagonist. Similarly, by describing the self, in *How It Is* and *Company*, not as a substantial identity but rather in terms of relational functions, especially those of speaking and hearing, they suggest that these texts define their own reading as a relation in which the search for such identity is necessarily inhibited. Throughout all of these analyses, to whose complexity I cannot do justice here, Bersani and Dutoit underscore Beckett's relentless unsettling of the frame whereby the work of art is detached from the real and, hence, at once subordinated to it and called upon to redeem it. The only objection I am inclined to raise regarding this section concerns the basis for a periodization of Beckett's career and, in particular, of his prose. Bersani and Dutoit perceive a subjectivity of unrelatedness in the trilogy in contrast to one of relationality in the later works, claiming, despite considerable textual evidence to the contrary, that the "I" of the trilogy and, in particular, of *The Unnamable* designates "a wholly intact self" (50), "an identity wholly independent of relational definitions" or a "prelinguistic essential being" (51). Not only do I find this claim untenable, I am also struck by how much of what the authors have to say about *How It Is* and *Company* applies equally to the trilogy.

The section devoted to Rothko focuses on the rectangles on rectangular canvases produced from the late 1940s until the painter's suicide in 1970. Here again, the notion of framing plays a crucial interpretive role, but with a difference: in the case of Rothko, the authors claim, the "work's

relation to its outside takes place within the work itself" (100). Thus, the subject of Rothko's paintings is the very act of seeing, or more precisely, an initiatory discrimination of forms. Prior to the Houston chapel and exclusive of the Seagram paintings, in which Bersani and Dutoit discern a kind of aesthetic atavism, this discrimination is articulated primarily through Rothko's use of color. While respectful of Rothko's virtuosity in this area, the authors are not seduced by it, but stress instead, in their "reading" of his rectangles, the evolution toward a chromatic proximity that makes visual distinction itself—between rectangles, between foreground and background, between frame and enframe—all but impossible. The "blocked vision" so induced appears to reach its culmination in the somber paintings of the Houston chapel, where the failure of distinct forms to emerge from within the canvases blurs the very boundary between their own space and the field in which we encounter them. Here, Rothko clearly rejoins Beckett, beyond the distinction between verbal and visual art: and both anticipate the authors' treatment of Resnais, to the extent that their irreducible formal ambiguity constitutes, according to Bersani and Dutoit, the very principle of composition of such films as *Mon Oncle d'Amérique* and *Muriel*.

The principle, most often referred to in the last section of the book as "inaccurate replication," determines in large part the relative value ascribed by Bersani and Dutoit to Resnais' many films, of which they consider the above-mentioned and *Night and Fog* to be the most noteworthy, while flouting much received opinion by characterizing *Last Year at Marienbad* as less formally radical than *Muriel* and attributing the success of *Hiroshima mon amour* to Duras' "commercially appealing fascination with the luxurious masochism of bourgeois love . . . weakly disguised by a great deal of pseudo-political intensity about the horrors of Hiroshima and the Nazi occupation of France" (189). Whether discussing the ambiguous sepia-like footage of *Night and Fog*, the bewildering inextrication of past and present in *Muriel*, the return of the "same" scene shot from a different angle in *Mon Oncle d'Amérique*, or any of numerous other examples, Bersani and Dutoit see in the inaccurate replication of filmic occasion not only an aesthetic but also, and perhaps especially, a political virtue: by focusing attention on the frame itself, Resnais stalls the very movement whereby cinematic narrative actively makes sense, masters or redeems the real and hence establishes its own authority. At the same time, recalling Beckett's texts and Rothko's paintings, these films point, through their effect on us, toward a subjectivity no longer reduced to the pseudo-alternatives of self-containment and self-dispersion, a subjectivity for which the experience of failure may give birth, in the authors' words, to "a new kind of power" (9).

This Bersani and Dutoit now, "is difficult to think about, even more difficult to imagine in concrete political terms" (9). To be sure. But

Bersani and Dutoit bring us at least to the threshold of that difficulty: *Arts of Impoverishment* not only argues persuasively in favor of Beckett, Rothko, and Resnais as figures of resistance to cultural authority, it also enacts that resistance itself by affirming, in art, a radical, irredeemable contingency.

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Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons. *On Bataille: Critical Essays*. Edited and translated with an introduction by Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons. Albany: State of New York, 1995. Pp. Viii + 338.

In the past 25 years Bataille has emerged as one of the most important writers and thinkers in France for the period from 1928 to his death in 1962. Yet he defies classification and categorization; in some ways, that is precisely his attraction. (In this respect he resembles Nietzsche—a more disciplined thinker—who was a strong influence on his thought.) Since the publication of his *Oeuvres complètes*, begun in 1970 (by now there are 11 volumes, none of them as yet translated), scholars and critics have been wrestling with this difficult and recalcitrant thinker. Is he a sociologist/anthropologist of “sovereignty”? Is he a theologian (or an “atheologian”), a Gnostic, a negative mystic? Is he an eroticist, a pornographer, or both? Books that have been written about Bataille tend to fall into two categories: collections of probing essays, such as Denis Hollier’s *La Prise de la Concorde* (1974); or attempts at a more systematic treatment, such as Michelle H. Richman’s *Georges Bataille* (1982). There is also, for the English-speaking reader, a very useful anthology of his earlier writings, edited by Allan Stoekl (*Visions of Excess*, 1985). For the French reader, there are the special issues devoted to Bataille: *Critique* (1963), of which he had been the founding editor, and *L’Arc* (1967), as well as the proceedings of the Colloque de Cérisy in 1972 on Artaud/Bataille (1973); and in English, there are the important issues of the *Stanford French Review* (1986) and of *Yale French Studies* (1978, 1990). One might say that at the present stage, essay collections are perhaps more appropriate than larger “comprehensive” studies, simply because it will take time to sort out, absorb, and digest Bataille’s complex production. One does not really write *about* Bataille; one writes “around” him. The book under review wisely chooses the *recueil* approach by assembling earlier and some recent writings in a meaningful arrangement. The editor, Leslie Ann Boldt-Irons (translator of *L’Expérience intérieure*, also published by the SUNY Press in 1988), has arranged the essays (20 in all) under convenient rubrics:

Bataille and Philosophical Inquiry; Expenditure, General Economy and Political Commitment; Alterity, Heterology and Communication; Inner Experience and the Subject; and *Histoire de l'oeil* and Bataille's Fiction.

A revealing hint of the problem for interpreters and critics of Bataille is to be found in a short note of 1953, included in *La Somme athéologique*:

In the sort of thought I am introducing, what counts is never the affirmation. What I say I say without doubt, but I know that I bear within myself the urge (*mouvement*) that wants the affirmation to vanish afterwards. If I had to be given a place in the history of thought, it would be, I think, for having discerned in our human life the effects of the "vanishing of the discursive reality," and for having drawn from the description of these effects a vanishing light: that light dazzles perhaps, but it foreshadows the opacity of the *night*; it foreshadows only the night. (*Oeuvres complètes* V, 231 [1973]; translated by the author)

This statement shows Bataille to be non-systematic by design, a very strange and inverted Hegelian; in some ways, even an anti-intellectualist, as Sartre observes (*Situations* I, 138), and a wayward disciple of Nietzsche. As Boldt-Irons remarks, in Bataille's writings "the investigation of the relationship of thought and experience to traditional philosophical inquiry is radicalized" (21), and because of those writings the relationship of Nietzsche to Hegel is in need of being reformulated. As a matter of fact, *all* of Bataille's thinking is "radical": it questions and attacks roots; it does not pursue notions of "development" or "consistency" to the end and, in addition, generally negates those notions, as if to insist that thinking has been merely thinking and that anything resembling an aspiration toward truth or closure is obstinately abrogated. Even the topic of laughter, so important to both Nietzsche and Bataille, is here negated; Sartre dubbed it "ascèse par le rire" (160). And that term "ascèse" underscores the religious "mission" of Bataille (if we can call a negative orientation a mission): his consistent preoccupation with transgression, sacrifice, and death mark him as a Catholic in the company of Baudelaire, Huysmans, and Genet, actually exceeding their *maudit* proclivities. Sartre's formulation is close to the mark: "un chrétien honteux" (166). Denis Hollier is more generous: "Bataille's writing (*écriture*) is but an attempt to escape from upward (*ascendante*) idealization. It is an effort to think low (*penser le bas*), to have the lowest thoughts possible, an effort whereby this writing manifests itself as *subversive*" (*La Prise de la Concorde* 192; translated by the author). We constantly come back to the words radical, subversive, negative. One of the keys to that position is to be found in

L'Expérience intérieure, the central piece of the *Somme athéologique*, which in actuality constitutes a radically new negative mysticism:

In ecstasy, you can *let yourself go*, that's the satisfaction, the happiness, the platitude. Saint John of the Cross brings out its seductive image and the ravishment, but then appeases himself by a theopathic state. I have followed his method of desiccation to the very end. (V, 66-67; translation by the author)

L'Expérience intérieure is masterfully analyzed in two of the best essays in this collection, by Julia Kristeva and by Jean-Louis Baudry. Kristeva notes astutely:

It is following the completion of Christianity, and its affirmative moments, postulating the subject and knowledge, thus creating an opening for society as well as modern philosophy—that Bataille affirms a new practice. His approach is thus situated vis-a-vis the closure of Christian idealism, rather than its ignorance or its avoidance. (239)

The final section of *On Bataille* contains three essays on his fiction, centering on the best-known *L'Histoire de l'oeil*. Here Susan R. Sulciman's chapter, entitled "Transgression and the Avant-Garde: Bataille's *Histoire de l'oeil*," is outstanding. Julia Kristeva had already observed in her essay that the fictional works "affirm themes of eroticism in order to dissolve them" (247).

How is one to read those works? Eroticism, when one encounters it in Sappho, or in John Donne, or in D.H. Lawrence, or in Paul Eluard, or in Nabokov, is generally joyous, affirmative, most of the time celebratory. In Baudelaire, it becomes double-edged, but rarely repellent. The reader is able to take a position toward the material and the events and develop a perspective. This is hardly possible with Bataille. *L'Histoire de l'oeil* can be read (and grasped) only if eroticism is understood in a different manner, in the way Bataille yokes it to ecstasy *and* degradation (not only of the female but also of the male body), links it to sacrificial ritual, to guilt and death. Inasmuch as it is, for Bataille, primarily visceral, emetic, centered around the fascination with transgression, it is pornographic. Despite Roland Barthes' insistence (discussed in Michael Halley's essay in this volume) that this *récit* is intertextual and must be understood as generating its meaning from within, virtually no reader can fail to respond (one way or the other) to the succession of nauseating details, which are not merely a chain of metaphorical/metonymic transformations, as Barthes would have it. Susan Suleiman subjects the work to a rigorous psychoanalytical analysis and finds that here—as well as in Bataille's other pornographic writings (especially in *Ma mère*)—the "mother's body functions as mediation in the Oedipal narrative, whose only (two) subjects are male" (328). That, it seems to this reader, is the true core of Bataille's transgressive "excess." If one were to imagine ecstasy expressing itself

spasmodically rather than spiritually, one would be close to piercing the essence of Bataille's erotic writings, as well as of his book *L'Erotisme* (1957).

Bataille's thinking and writing literally strains toward the savage, the bestial, the archaic components residing in the human makeup. In some ways, a reading of his reflections and comments on the Lascaux caves (not discussed in the present volume) makes not only a good introduction to his work but also an unusually calm and measured one in which reason, passion, and meditation are felicitously balanced. In the final analysis, what makes Bataille's work important is articulated by Steven Ungar's observation in his essay on "Phantom Lascaux": "Bataille confers on art a transgressive function that marks a passage toward the distinctly human category of the sacred" (*Yale French Studies* 78, 259). And he concludes that "Bataille wrote in awareness that culture is continually invented and reinvented not merely by an accretion of understanding, but because the very claim of knowledge from which such an understanding derives is in itself the product of systems of meaning and representation" (262). That, better than anything, explains our culture's need for occasional "excess" and "transgression." The essays in the present volume make their various and variegated contributions to this ongoing inquiry into inquiry itself, of which Bataille is such an unusual example.

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Gilles Deleuze. *Negotiations*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia UP, 1995. Pp. 221.

Ever since purchasing Gilles Deleuze's *Pourparlers* (Paris: Minuit, 1990) shortly after its publication, I have anticipated the appearance of its translation. This collection of short essays by and interviews with Deleuze (and in one text, with Félix Guattari as well) provides a sweeping overview of his developing thought from *Anti-Oedipus* (Minuit, 1972) onward. Even for readers who do not need the English text (i.e. for whom the original French text would normally suffice), the new translation is still quite welcome: besides providing a useful set of translator's notes (by Martin Joughin), the collection now brings to our Anglophone colleagues a number of clear and eloquent texts that will further demystify the words, concepts and *pensée à deux* (the "two-fold thought") that are well-known traits of Deleuze and Guattari's works.

Divided into five sections—"From *Anti-Oedipus* to *A Thousand Plateaus*," "Michel Foucault," "Philosophy," "Politics"—*Negotiations* opens with a group of texts on the collaborative work with

Guattari. Of particular interest is the re-translation, now in its entirety, of Deleuze's "Letter to a Harsh Critic" (previously available only in *Semiotext(e)* II.3 [1977]). Responding (in 1973) to Michel Cressole's tendentious criticism (in *Deleuze* [Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1973]), among other things, for having sold out the revolutionary promise of schizoanalysis proclaimed in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze provides both a decisive yet compassionate rebuke and a clear description of the trajectory of his career, before and after his encounter with Guattari in 1968. While extraordinarily idiosyncratic, this "letter" offers the reader an entirely original departure point for the following chapters. The two interviews that complete this opening section constitute related yet distinct perspectives on the collaborative project known globally as *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Whereas Deleuze and Guattari speak about *Anti-Oedipus* (with Catherine Clément, 1972) in the enthusiastic and provocative tenor and terms that characterize the initial volume, Deleuze's comments with reporters from *Libération* eight years later are much more detailed, theorized, at once introducing an array of new concepts and making important links to the contemporary field of critical writing.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 of *Negotiations* consist of shorter essays, interviews and letters that focus on three of Deleuze's works published in the 1980s (all at Minuit, translations published by the U of Minnesota P): *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (1983, trans. 1986) and *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (1985, trans. 1989; Section 2); *Foucault* (1986, trans. 1988; Section 3); and *Le Pli* (1988, trans. 1993; Section 4). Each of the pieces in Section 2 (four interviews and a letter to Serge Daney, subtitled "Optimism, Pessimism and Travel") focuses on issues such as Godard's aesthetics, the role of the philosopher-critic, Bergson's theories, and questions about the imaginary. The "letter" to Daney (serving as preface to his book, *Ciné-Journal* [1986]) offers a reflection on contemporary conceptualizations of cinema, both Daney's own (as journalist and critic) and Deleuze's interest in creating productive juxtapositions, e.g., a confrontation between cinema and television.

In the three conversations about Foucault (all from 1986), Deleuze combines succinct personal reflections on his relationship with the fellow philosopher and a more extensive discussion of how he comprehends and elaborates a number of Foucauldian concepts. Of all the sections of *Negotiations*, this one may well prove to have the greatest pedagogical value since it allows fairly ready access for readers familiar with Foucault's thought. As Deleuze "does Foucault" in his own inimitable way, the intersections of his terms with Foucault's own—subjectification, folds, Outside thought—as well as Martin Joughin's helpful footnotes can be of great interest to readers seeking an opening to Deleuze's work, particularly if read in tandem with *Foucault*.

While one could fairly argue that all sections of *Negotiations* are devoted to philosophy, Section 4 emphasizes certain concepts and their util-

ity for philosophical inquiry à la Deleuze: the importance of “mediators” (*intercesseurs*) for creating concepts and “tracing a path between impossibilities” (133); Deleuze’s role as intellectual and teacher (134-42); and, more generally, the place of “multiplicity,” “becomings” and “assemblages” (143-55) in the work that leads to Deleuze’s study of Leibniz and the Fold (156-63); and in a brief letter (to Réda Bensmaïa), the importance of Spinoza’s *Ethics* for creating “style” in philosophy as Deleuze understands it, i.e., around the poles of “concepts” (new ways of thinking), “percepts” (new ways of seeing or construing), and “affects” (new ways of feeling).

The conversation with Toni Negri that begins the final section, “Politics,” helps us understand how Deleuze situates his work within a socio-historical context. Particularly resonant are Deleuze’s explanations of his and Guattari’s life-long Marxism and their commitment to politics, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, through their exploration of “lines of flight,” “minorities” rather than class, and the “war machine.” His response to Negri about *Foucault* inspires Deleuze to define our contemporary “control societies” (synonymous with “communication societies”) and then to suggest the importance of thinking of “control” in terms of its impact on our subjectivities. The book’s concluding “Postscript on Control Societies” makes a rather chilling final statement: while repeating a number of points raised in response to Negri, Deleuze is grimly clear in stating that the shift from disciplinary society to control society means submitting to passwords or “codes indicating whether access to some information should be allowed or denied,” with individuals becoming “dividuals”, i.e., “control man [who] undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits. *Surfing* has taken over from all the old *sports*” (180). Far from being resigned to this new state of “discipline,” Deleuze argues for understanding and establishing “the basic socio-technological principles” of this new system of domination, in a range of sites (he points briefly to prisons, schools, hospitals, businesses), as a way of defining what any possible means of resistance to this system might be.

This review does no justice whatsoever to the richness of Deleuze’s expressive force and to the keen insights that he provides at every turn on a wide range of issues and practices. With typical modesty, he claims that whereas intellectuals “are wonderfully cultivated, they have views on everything,” he is “not an intellectual, because [he] can’t supply views like that, [with] no stock of views to draw on” (137). Even were this the case, so much the better, for *Negotiations* provides a rich stock of questions and responses for readers seeking keys to the originality of Deleuze’s thought and a range of tools for conceptual creativity.

Dominique D. Fisher, *Staging of Language and Language(s) of the Stage: Mallarmé's poème critique and Artaud's poetry-minus-text*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994. Pp. 151.

What do Mallarmé and Artaud have in common? Fisher brilliantly demonstrates that they open the way to the poetic and theatrical avant-garde, which evolves beyond the written text and beyond the concrete, visible scenic space in order to produce a "space where writing is staged" (122). In this "off-stage" space occurs a fusion of different arts (drawing, painting, music, and dance) and genres (poetry and theater). Both redefine the traditional frontiers of the arts and literature.

The strength and originality of Fisher's study lies in her analysis of Mallarmé and her choice of prose texts (*Poème critique*, *Le Livre*, *La Musique et les lettres*, *Le Mystère dans les lettres*, *Crayonné au théâtre*, *Hamlet*, *Ballets*, *Les Fonds dans le ballet*, to name a few). She demonstrates how Mallarmé's poetics cannot be defined simply within the framework of blanks and silence. Mallarmé destroys linearity through rhythmic and spatial architecture, the use of parenthetical clauses and punctuation as visual and spatial components, a disregard of grammatical rules, and a plurality of modes of re-presentation (oral, visual, gestural) that impose ruptures in meaning. Poetry is "the antithesis of a literary genre," "at the limits of visual and musical representation" (xiii). The poetic text takes shape in a non-Euclidian space that engenders the polysemy of the poetic word, a dismantling of the metaphoric network, and of the linguistic sign, ruptures in the syntagmatic chain, visualization and spatialization of language, and inscription of physical movement within the utterance. The *Poème critique* and *Le Livre* are examples of an open work, with permutable syntactical networks and multiple paths for the reader's gaze because of the extralinguistic components of writing.

The end of the traditional distinction between art and literature is also reflected in Mallarmé's revolutionary conception of theater. He dreamt of a theater freed from the written argument and the accessories of representation, and in which performing arts transcend the domain of language. "The theatrical character has the same status as the poetic word: that of a screen behind which the end of representation is staged" (81). He perceives Shakespeare's Hamlet as an emblematic figure, freed from its written text, staging purely corporeal and rhythmic text (foreshadowing Artaud's hieroglyphic actor).

Artaud's conception of theater as a new form of poetry without words, a "sign language," echoes Mallarmé's conception of poetry. An off-stage space is created through the hieroglyphic actor who composes spatialized geometry and dance rhythm, and through the combination of scenic elements (sounds, lights, noises, etc.) with bodily writing. The actor uses

movements, intonations, screams, and gestures, and moves away from linguistic signs which aim at communication. The scenic stage becomes a multiple space of writing, including objects, actors, and spectators.

Artaud's theater refuses to copy or to imitate the world and attempts to create a scene which is "the mark of an infinite circulation of signs from the physical space to the virtual space of the stage; in other words, the tearing of space" (96). As in Mallarmé's writing, the spectator/reader is also included here.

Fisher's study is based on a semiotic approach and constantly comments on an impressive range of key French and German (in particular) literary and artistic works relevant to her topic (for example Nietzsche, Wagner, Baudelaire, Kleist, Valéry, Ponge . . .) as well as the current theoretical texts on Mallarmé and Artaud. Her book constitutes an outstanding contribution to current studies of poetry, theater, and modernity, and offers new parameters in the domain of nonverbal and visual signs.

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Jane Goodall. *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. Pp. 230.

To most readers, the name of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) has carried multiple connotations, more by the drama of his own life and madness than by the corpus of his works and unorthodox dramaturgy. Jane Goodall, Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of Newcastle, Australia, sets out to reinterpret this controversial writer by examining anew his whole cosmogony. Feeling that most approaches to Artaud's work led to a critical impasse, she chooses to displace the focus in order to emphasize Artaudian dynamics of the human condition and his dramaturgical vision. In *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama*, Goodall (following Susan Sontag's footsteps and expanding on her views, but refuting her conclusions as well as Derrida's on Gnosticism as madness) seeks to reinstate Artaud not just as a proponent of Theater of Cruelty but as an essential figure who marks a turning point in modern intellectual thought. Her argument is based on the fact that he succeeds in confronting the crucial questions of matter, consciousness, and language and wrestles with their problematics. This validation of Artaud as a "heretical" philosopher and a Gnostic replaces the previous view of Artaud as a "mad" dramatist and a failure.

<https://newprairiepress.org/stcl/vol21/iss2/10>

This volume covers most of Artaud's production from *L'Ombilic des Limbes* (1925) to the last texts before his death in 1948, including sce-

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narios and drawings. The introduction clearly delineates the critical standpoint and defines the Gnostic hermeneutics as opposed to orthodox doctrines of Christianity, ontology, theology, and knowledge. It stresses the logic of Gnosticism with its experience of doubleness, alterity, or otherness in consciousness, and vision of self as alien and demonized. Evil in the Gnostic credo becomes natural in the self and in the world. It must be recognized, thus, as a substantial force, according to Goodall, after Paul Ricoeur. If the cosmos is a battlefield and an everlasting villainous drama, how can Artaud construct his conceptual framework?

The answer lies in the following seven chapters which develop, gradually and chronologically, Artaud's positions and various shifts. Chapter One, named "Mise en scène," shows Artaud's links to the Surrealists before his expulsion and analyzes his mode of transgression in his cosmogonic drama and identification with the painter Paolo Ucello, his alter ego, using Descartes' logic, the alchemical process, Kristeva's subject, and Lacan's mirror stage. Chapter Two proceeds with the "supreme point," or point of destruction, in his cinematic language mainly, bringing the question of creation, violence, abjection, and death with suicide as a possible solution. Chapter Three delves deeper into the alienation of self since "the protagonist is co-resident with the antagonist" (77). Here, Goodall illustrates very well the power of that unauthorized, transgressive presence in defiance with the natural order as illustrated in Gothic literature. A good example in Artaud can be seen in the presence of the Prince of Abjection, Heliogabalus. Artaud theatricalizes anarchy so that it becomes a form of poetry and then extols the mind which has an affinity for the plague. Chapter Four reviews the essays in the theater of Cruelty, *Le Théâtre et son Double*, showing evil in the light of a kind of homeopathy and demonstrating the union of the self with the monstrous other. The ideas of a voyage out from the known world combines Gnosticism, in Chapter Five, with Artaud's Orientalism. Dramatic space, interior demarcations and geographical polarities all stress the search for origins from the foreign lands of the Galapagos and Mexico to the foreign-ness of the wanderer, his exile and split persona, as seen through the prism of Goodall, via Kristeva. In Chapters Six and Seven, Goodall, while explaining Artaud's schizophrenia in the asylum, debunks his myth of madness in language as presented by the virtuoso manoeuvre of Derrida. An account of Artaud's drawings shows that, on the one hand, the writer embraces negativity, i.e., a negatory dynamic, but on the other, says "no" to negation. This "positive" negativity finally seems to resolve all conflicts of negativity. In fact, Artaud relentlessly continues in his work to do battle with God and Satan. His struggle, which resembles the positions of Nietzsche's dead God and Heidegger's defaulting God, stands as quite different according to Goodall. The critic interprets Artaud's stance as a "modern assault on the onto-theological foundations of Western humanism" (220), and her demonstration is con-

This volume will probably be used as the most up-to-date and thorough critical analysis on Artaud in the English language. The specialists will gain great insight from it. The non-specialists will be more tested by it, especially if they are not familiar with Artaud's texts and have no knowledge of French thought or Post-Structuralist theories. Yet this volume is worth delving into for any interested reader. It is a must for any philosopher, French teacher, theater person, or reader who has an interest in occult traditions or esoteric literatures. It is extremely informative for the double movement of fascination and mistrust of Artaud for Gnostic and Cathar theories. The quotations in bilingual edition are very useful, and the bibliography is substantial. This book reviews most of the previous critical research done on Artaud and draws pertinent conclusions.

Will the volume completely dispel the romantic myth created by the imagination which has made Artaud the epitome of the authentic madman? No. Artaud may be considered a seer, and one can learn a great deal from his writings. But "true" madness, constantly commenting on itself with its tyrannical obsessions, transgressions, and dualities, contests humanity in its entirety. And the "truly" sane, even if none of us qualify and the definition of sanity remains forever elusive or non-existent, will not follow Artaud's thinking all the way. For example, one should reject Artaud's idea of victim as "good conductor" and the sacrificial act as "curative violence" (122). Goodall is good enough never to make ethical judgments, but it is up to the reader to make them, according to one's tolerance. Limits, indeed, become inherent to humanism. The critic must be praised for this intellectual presentation of high caliber on a complex writer, who is pictured not as a total failure in life and in his *écriture*, but as the symbol of a dynamic being who refuses to lose. Artaud's very struggle with the "other" in himself and in language keeps him for ever young and makes him a perfect example of modernity.

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Mary Lydon. *Skirting the Issue: Essays in Literary Theory*.
 Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1995. Pp. 294.

Mary Lydon's recent publication is a *tour de force*. The 14 essays which comprise this collection, several of which were substantially revised for the volume, were written between 1981 and 1991, and foreground a kaleidoscope of concerns, such as the role of theory, the place of woman

Duchamp, Proust, Fortuny, Adami, Mallarmé, Duras, Beauvoir, Truffaut, and Beckett are accompanied by equally inspired readings of Lacan, Barthes, Foucault, and Freud, among others. Adopting a sartorial conceit, Lydon weaves her probings of literature and theory with the threads of intuitive insight, lucid prose, intelligence, and wit. Her readings are never pedantic, always illuminating, and, often, startling in their discoveries.

The essays are grouped together under five headings: "The Critical Self," "From Dress to Text," "A Reader's Discourse," "The Procession of Theory," and "Writing/Translation," and are bound by the conviction that, as Lydon maintains in the "Introduction," the literary critic must not be apologetic about her task. Notwithstanding the anxiety of certain critics about the "luxury" or subjectivity of literary criticism, it is not the case that either historical and sociological readings are more verifiable and/or ethical, or that criticism, to be more honest, must be autobiographical. For Lydon, criticism always originates with the personal circumstances of the critic and a desire to write. Consequently, it is autobiographical (but not confessional, a point that she elaborates upon in "Foucault and Feminism: a Romance of Many Dimensions") and both contingent and necessary. She reminds us that the word "theory" holds the archaic meaning, in French, of "procession" which, with its embedding of the word "process," underlines the dynamics of the practice. In celebrating in these essays the "pleasures" of the text, which arise from sound scholarship, chance associations, intuitive hunches, and a passion for writing, Lydon awakens and sharpens our love for reading and—for some—writing literary criticism.

As the title suggests, Lydon approaches her material at a slant, or from an angle, and with a view to feminist concerns. "Skirting the Issue" denotes not an evasive tactic but rather a reading practice, a sounding of the fabric of texts, the texture (textile) of the textual (garment) which has been cut into "on the bias." Throughout the collection, Lydon addresses the place of women, their coming to writing, and women as read and written by others. Her attention to the feminine and the feminist locates the female form in the folds and drapery of signifying practices, not in the surface reductionism of essentialist statements.

The essay which lends its title to the collection, "Skirting the Issue: Mallarmé, Proust and Symbolism," demonstrates convincingly her critical approach to a feminine scholarship infused with contemporary theory. Starting from the premise that the symbolists put forth symbols which defied interpretation, she dissects Lacan's splitting of Mallarmé's famous distinction between the thing ("*la chose*") and the effect that it produces ("*effet*") into "*chose*" and "*rien*," from the two possible Latin roots for "*chose*," *causa* and *rem*. In Lacan's argument, the latter origin has been discarded "like a dress" ("*sa robe latine*" [p. 75]). Lydon unites the poet's linguistic concerns with those of the psychoanalyst and, emphasizing the femininity of "*la chose*" both grammatically and psychoanalytically

(Freud's concept of *Das Ding* as the mother) and its identification with "dress" in Lacan's analysis, meticulously spins the threads of her argument to show that Mallarmé (and Proust) find the metaphoric object of their desire in woman's "toilette," as exemplary not of "la chose" but of the effect produced. In a fascinating analysis of Mallarmé's *La Dernière Mode*, she exposes dress as masquerade and hints at the "dé" (thimble) in "Un coup de dés."

Lydon's acute sensitivity to words as signifying chains and her talent for ferreting out *en filigrane* associations and etymological coincidences produce surprise and, oftentimes, breathtaking "shock" in (this) reader. The playfulness of the archaeology is never gratuitous but rather illustrative of literary criticism's reliance on the contingent (chance associations) and the necessary (scholarship). For example, in "Hats and Cocktails: Simone de Beauvoir's Heady Texts," Lydon's reading of key words (arising haphazardly but interpreted with precision) which range from "apricot" to "turban" to "castor" to "stubbornness" results in a heady elucidation of the intoxicating "headiness" of Beauvoir's autobiographical texts which, often read only as informational sources, are literary delights of their own. Simone de Beauvoir, the woman, is seen to co-exist with "Simone de Beauvoir," the woman who writes herself into her texts. Lydon's manner of criticism is cut in the style of (*d'après*) Barthes's *Le Plaisir du Texte* and is illustrative of her point that autobiography is literary is theoretical is procession of references.

In " 'Here's Looking at You, Kid': Toast à Marcel Duchamp," the strategy is spatial and revolves, literally, around woman's form. Lydon deftly turns the tables on Duchamp's exposure of women by exposing Duchamp exposing women. Among the women reading women in the collection are Yourcenar, Colette, and Duras. "Calling oneself a woman" is seen to be problematical for both Yourcenar and Colette, who approach the issue in their writings from a negative standpoint and for different reasons. In *Coup de Grâce*, Lydon contends, the putative misogyny of the plot can be read ironically as Yourcenar's attempt to capture, novelistically, the non-place occupied by women in the world. Colette, Lydon argues convincingly, needed to veil her impulse to write by a double negation in order to escape her internal censor and an external one (Willy). Literature as a belated phenomenon (coming after the event that inspires it) and as a mis-taking of that event is foregrounded in Lydon's reading of Lacan's reading of Duras's *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* ("The Forgetfulness of Memory: Jacques Lacan, Marguerite Duras, and the Text"). A brilliant analysis of both Lacan's essay and Duras's text, Lydon succeeds in elucidating the fundamental difference of the speaking subject in Duras's novel

by linking games (*jeu de la moure/jeu de l'amour*), grammar (the future anterior), and the ambiguity of *la* and *là* in Duras's novel (*Lol/Lola/"n'est pas là"*) in her demonstration of the play of writing as a memory that is in actuality a forgetting. The style of her essay emulates what it elucidates—woman as absence, memory as forgetting and desire as non-mastery.

These—and others not mentioned for lack of space—are powerful essays which, by the very nature of the questions they address, resist the summary mode of the brief book review format. Suffice it to say, the pleasures of Lydon's texts should be required reading for all students, critics, and *amateurs* of literature.

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Dagmar Barnouw. *Critical Realism: History, Photography, and the Work of Siegfried Kracauer*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1994. Pp. 350.

This remarkable essay traces Siegfried Kracauer's evolving critique of modernity from the 1920s to the 1960s and offers an in-depth analysis of the parallels between historiography and photography he drew in his last book and of the repercussions of such parallels. Intrigued by the position of the historian and the photographer as cultural observers in the larger sense of the term, Kracauer sees it as tentative, subject to shifts in time and space, or even, as Dagmar Barnouw brilliantly shows here, as subject to Derridien *différance(s)*. In more ways than one, the observer is situated (to paraphrase Wim Wenders' film title) "far away, so close," at once removed from her object of inquiry held at the distance of the gaze, and involved, almost empathetic with it, as she partakes of the culture under her own scrutiny.

Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966) first wrote for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* after World War I. There he published his autobiography, *Ginster*, as well as numerous articles, including film reviews, which established him as a well-respected cultural critic of the Weimar republic. At the time, he also maintained conflicted cultural alliances with Marxist critics Theodore W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, and Max Horkheimer. Barnouw discusses in detail his desire for both intellectual kinship with these thinkers and his own independence from the Frankfurt School, which explains his uneasy dual rapport of allegiance and difference with its members.

During his first exile in Paris, he moved from the cultural critique of his time (his own analytical "close-up" view of contemporary surface

phenomena as expressions of culture) to history from a "middle distance." He wrote *Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit* (1937) (*Orpheus in Paris: Offenbach and the Paris of his Time*, 1938), not a biography but, as he put it himself, a *Gesellschaftsbiographie*, i.e. a (problematic) "biography" of Paris' Second Empire society emblemized by an individual narrative. He was already engaged in what was to become his lifelong fascination with the cultural meaning of history. However, unlike other German exiles with whom he shared this interest, he offered no solution in his rewriting of intellectual history, thus distancing himself from the expatriate intelligentsia.

The books born out of his American exile reflect his growing interest in comparing historiography and film (or photography), as attested by their titles alone: *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947), and *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960). Sensitive to the rapid technological advances which followed World War II, Kracauer was fascinated by the commonality of purpose and process shared by both media to represent cultural phenomena. After quoting Kracauer ("If film is art, it is art with a difference. Along with photography, film is the only art which leaves its raw material more or less intact" [*Theory of Film*, Preface, x]), Barnouw asks, in her own beautiful exchange with Kracauer's text: is history a science with a comparable difference? How do both photographer and historian perceive? Record? Since they observe and represent culture from various times and places, how significant are their own shifts to their representation of a culture?

If Kracauer sees film and history as "so close," are their modes of representation really not further apart than their common documentary imagination might allow? The problem of memory—individual or cultural—is central to the tasks of both history-making and film-making. For Barnouw, exiled critic Kracauer, traveling through time(s) and space(s) further away from home and from his own immediate history, naturally conjures up the myth-imbued image of the historian or cultural critic as Orpheus (an image used by Kracauer himself for his *Offenbach*): "For Orpheus, desiring to undo the ravages of time and to bring back, have back fully, there is the one enchanted instant of regaining and losing" (168). Then, all cultural witnesses and critics, historians, film-makers, as well as the empathetic critic of Kracauer, experience these moments of tragic loss and precious retrieving. As Barnouw discusses Kracauer's epistemological problems at stake in the position of the observer, and in the movement in time and space between the "regained" and the "lost," he eventually regains his voice as she discusses his last, unfinished masterpiece, *History: Last Things before They Last* (1969), leaving him to have

In the introduction to *History*, there is an uncharacteristically personal observation, offered characteristically within parentheses. It refers to the dead as historical reality, and to historical reality as the dead looking back at us—like the portraits of August Sander (figs. 5-10): "(I sometimes wonder whether advancing age does not increase our susceptibility to the speechless plea of the dead; the older one grows, the more he is likely to realize that his future is the future of the past-history)" (6). And, like the women and men and children in Sander's images, this future both offers itself and retreats into strangeness. (264)

In the end, Barnouw has succeeded in recalling Kracauer's text into actuality, into life, with a rare *maestria*. This book is replete with revelations on time and memory in the photographic sense of the term: we know about these concepts but have yet to see them fully. In order to provide us with as full a picture as possible, Barnouw brings into her discussion more recent theories of photography, historiography, and visual representation. The final pages open the window wider on the double openness of history and memory, looking over the debates of our period, the late twentieth century, with the projected nostalgia inherent to such delicate matters.

This erudite text is also beautifully written, although, at times, the analysis is so detailed that some areas of the text become redundant. As a final note to the editor—not to the author—this reader wishes the editing had been more careful and deplores the absence of a good, old-fashioned, bibliography of Kracauer's works and secondary sources at the end of the text. The present arrangement in the form of notes prevents this rich essay from being also used as a readily accessible reference book.

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Ingrid Pfandl-Buchegger. *David Lodge als Literaturkritiker, Theoretiker und Romanautor*. Anglistische Forschungen 222. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1993. Pp. 527.

Which of us has not, at some time or other, thought of writing a novel, of crossing the bridge that separates the critic from the poet? David Lodge has spent a lifetime making this crossing. His "double-life," as he puts it, as a university professor and a respected author, grants him a unique perspective from both sides of the bridge. He has been a leading figure in the theoretical debate in Britain over the last few decades and has simultaneously emerged as a best-selling writer of fiction. It is natural to suppose that his knowledge of continental literary theories has helped shape his

development as a writer, and conversely, that his own creative experiences have deepened his understanding of theory and enriched his criticism. As the title of her study suggests, Pfandl-Buchegger's aim is to describe Lodge's work in the critical as well as the creative field and to investigate the reciprocal influences of these different activities on his development. She argues, roughly speaking, that Lodge began his career as a liberal humanist critic in the tradition of Matthew Arnold; his early novels, accordingly, were written in a fairly conventional, realistic mode. Under the influence of structuralist and later poststructuralist literary theories, his interest shifted from thematic to linguistic and formal aspects of the text, and his own fiction became increasingly experimental. His practical experience as a writer, however, led him to reject the more radical postulates of poststructuralist theory (such as "the death of the author"). The mature Lodge, she concludes, is a cautiously postmodern writer, in her words, "ein gemäßigter 'Freidenker,' der den Kompromiß sucht und die Begriffe Toleranz und Pluralismus auf sein Fahne geschrieben hat"—'a moderate "freethinker," who looks for compromise and who has written the terms tolerance and pluralism onto his flag' (495).

Pfandl-Buchegger's work, which was based on her 1991 dissertation, contains two large sections devoted, respectively, to his scholarly and creative publications from 1960 to 1985. The first section presents a work by work summary of Lodge's literary criticism viewed against the prevailing trends in the British intellectual landscape of the 1960s and 1970s. She discusses *The Language of Fiction* and *The Novelist at the Crossroads* in two short chapters and then devotes considerably more attention to his later works, *The Modes of Modern Writing* and *Working with Structuralism*. Although her exposition of individual works is clear and accurate, she often fails to see the forest for the trees. In other words, her exhaustive description of detailed points is undermined by a lack of critical engagement with the material: she resists synthesis or interpretation and offers surprisingly little commentary or analysis of her own. Readers must therefore draw their own conclusions and deduce the outline of Lodge's development for themselves. Moreover, her decision to handle Lodge's criticism separately from his fiction hinders an evaluation of the interrelationship between the two fields. I believe a better approach would have been to present a rigorous comparison of Lodge's critical and fictional work produced during different stages of his career.

The second section deals with Lodge's novels in chronological order—again, the earlier novels (*The Picturegoers*; *Ginger, You're Barmy*; *The British Museum is Falling Down*; *Out of the Shelter*) receive much less attention than his later, more complex works (*Changing Places*; *How Far Can You Go?*; *Small World*). She discusses each novel according to a uniform approach that includes information about the literary and biographical background of the work as well as a plot summary and a de-

scription of the major themes and characters. She is primarily concerned, however, with the narrative forms and techniques used by Lodge and she documents these with great precision and cogency. The narrative theories of F.K. Stanzel, whom she generally follows, prove very useful in elucidating the innovations which Lodge undertakes in his later novels, notably the increased reliance on an auctorial narrator and the thematization of fictionality. Although she presents a satisfactory overview of Lodge's œuvre up to 1985, she restricts her view to the texts themselves and does not systematically consider his work in relation to outside critical and literary developments. The one notable exception is *Small World*, perhaps the most popular of Lodge's novels, to which she devotes more than 100 pages. In two extended and very interesting digressions, she examines Lodge's integration of poststructuralist literary discourse into a fictional setting as well as his adaptation of the romance tradition to the postmodern novel.

Despite the thoroughness of her readings, the weaknesses of the first section are apparent here as well, chiefly a tendency to provide lengthy descriptions and a hesitancy to draw forceful conclusions. The book ends with a 30-page summary which recapitulates the main points of her study, but which does not provide a substantial resolution to the question of the reciprocal influences and interrelationship of author and critic. Had her aim been merely to provide a detailed overview of Lodge's fictional and critical writings, I would say that the book was a success. Pfandl-Buchegger's study is one of very few that focuses on Lodge in his entirety, and although she occasionally covers important aspects of his work superficially, she presents on the whole a balanced and thoughtful account of his work. For a German audience unfamiliar with David Lodge, her book offers a lucid though somewhat lengthy introduction to his writings and his literary environment. For those already acquainted with Lodge, on the other hand, the book provides little in the way of new information or insight.

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Clarise Samuels. *Holocaust Visions: Surrealism and Existentialism in the Poetry of Paul Celan*. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993. Pp. 134.

At the beginning of the preface to her study of Paul Celan, Clarise Samuels promises much more than she can eventually deliver. Through her analytic method and philosophical approach, students as well as literary scholars are assured greater accessibility to this notoriously difficult

poetry. Although considerable light is shed on its intellectual foundations—on the preconditions that disposed Celan to write such verse—few readers of any stripe will find that *Holocaust Visions* lightens their task by making the poetry itself more transparent or its world of images any easier to penetrate. In the final analysis, it is fundamentally a secondary work of classification rather than mediation.

Following an introductory chapter on a selection of Celan's formidable array of commentators, the author then moves on in the following three chapters to the construction of her theoretical groundwork, an examination of the poetry's "surrealistic ideology," the "existentialist foundation" of surrealism as well as of Celan's poetics. Two other prominent contributors to the grand narratives of modernity are invoked as well in these pages—Marx and Freud—for the part they played in the superstructures of Breton's aesthetics and Sartre's philosophy. The ultimate point of this excursus, however, an excursus that takes up a full third of the book, is to illustrate what the author calls on the first page the "unified philosophical system" underlying the body of Celan's work. Individual poems, lines, or images are cited and come under scrutiny only after the parameters of her study have been established in these first chapters. The version of Celan that emerges here is that of a poet-philosopher whose desire to express certain eternal truths led him to surrealism as a method, existentialism as a philosophy, and the Holocaust as a central symbol.

An extended commentary of representative poems at this or, for that matter, any other point might have provided a more persuasive case for this version. But in order to establish Celan's indebtedness to surrealism, the author chooses instead to construct a taxonomy of his motifs in the fifth and sixth chapters. These are sub-categorized as basically spatial or temporal representations or as representations of persons and actions. The following chapter continues the descriptive approach, characterizing and enumerating the various syntactical forms of Celan's imagery that tie it to surrealism. In this enumeration the author moves from the shorter forms of the poet's compound words, genitive phrases, and elliptic sentences to the longer syntactical forms of complete sentences and full stanzas. These consistently call forth similar or, more often, the same descriptive adjectives: absurd, bizarre, surreal, incongruous, illogical. Moving from surrealistic method to thematic content in the eighth chapter ("The Holocaust Universe"), the author holds fast to her own itemizing method by citing example after example of this central motif in Celan's work. Many citations are convincing, yet the very nature of the poetry often muddies the difference between "realistic" and "subtle" references. Consciously limiting her own interpretive discourse to remarks that appear to support her theoretical groundwork, Samuels nevertheless refers to contrary views at times. She cites Peter Horst Neumann's view, for example, that "Todestag" contains no unequivocal allusion to Auschwitz, yet justifi-

ably insists, however, that images of a concentration camp do indeed permeate this famous poem. More interpretive commentary—a total of four paragraphs—is devoted to this “most direct and blatant [sic] expression” of the Holocaust theme than to any of the other cited poems or passages. The final chapter functions as a counterpoint to the one preceding it, undertaking to locate and valorize the utopian strain in Celan’s work. Despite a couple of concrete poetic allusions in highly romanticized form, Samuels concludes that, for the most part, utopia exists as mere potential in Celan’s apocalyptic imagery, as the latent force of renewal inherent in the vastly more powerful forces of destruction.

The translations of poems and passages the author provides are generally thoughtful, but it is unclear why some individual lines should be given in German and English while others are cited in German only. Beyond this relatively trivial criticism, however, lies a more substantial one. The aesthetic phenomenon of Celan’s poetry itself, a marvel of language rivaling the most exquisite linguistic creations of any time and place, has been relegated to secondary significance. The poems are treated as (mostly) fragmentary evidence of the existence of a conceptual superstructure, asked about their knowledge of a set of ideas rather than directly interrogated. All reading, of course, is inherently perspectivist, but in *Holocaust Visions* the perspective overwhelms the object.

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Verena Stefan. *Shedding and Literally Dreaming. Shedding*, Trans. Johanna Steigleder Moore and Beth E. Weckmueller; *Literally Dreaming*. Trans. Johanna Albert and Tobe Levin; “Euphoria and Cacophony.” Translated by Tobe Levin; Afterword by Tobe Levin. New York: The Feminist Press, 1994. Pp. 176.

To read Verena Stefan in English translation 20 years after the first appearance of *Shedding* is to engage in the discourse of German feminism as it emerged from the leftist and counterculture hotbed of West Berlin in the 1970s. By the mid-1980s her unassuming little book had sold over 250,000 copies; it continues to be published by the feminist press Frauenoffensive.

Its very particularly situated 1970s sensibilities lend *Shedding* an odd tone. However intensely it may resonate with the quest for feminist self-discovery, many of Stefan’s concerns seem dated: the debates over women as comrades in the revolution, the boyfriend who won’t discuss *The Dialectic*

tic of Sex. Her glowing urgency has acquired that layer of displacement that often goes with a revisit to the recent past. Indeed the very city where most of *Shedding* takes place, West Berlin, is a historical entity; "united" Berlin in contemporary Germany is not the location of this narrator's emerging identity.

Shedding is nevertheless vital for today's English-language readers because Stefan has been so intrepid in the documentation of her self-discovery. Detailing that identity in journal sketches and poems, she imagines and refuses, explores and confronts. It is a journey of feminist theory, communal living, lesbian eroticism, experimental writing, and foreign travel. And in the writing of her new self, as a woman whose breasts feel pleasure and whose creativity is the center of her days, she must give herself to the process of the title.

In shrugging off the skins of heterosexuality, of full-time employment, of leftist politics, Stefan's negation becomes central, a force in itself. Removing herself from men is essential to Stefan's refusal, but *Shedding* sidesteps the conventional tropes of contemporary feminist narrative—the excitement of consciousness raising or the blushing pleasures of coming out. Indeed, some of the finest moments in the book depict the phases of not being clear about the next step. Embarking on intimacies with Fenna she says, "we even had to learn to speak. We were at one and the same time helpless and grateful in barren, unmapped territory" (56).

Cloe, the Gourd Woman at the end of *Shedding*, feels each blemish of her own skin and studies each motion as she makes a pot of tea. Her self-possession through the exploration of layers and layers of herself yields no explosive decisions; rather, it is depicted as an everyday familiarity. "What urgent little details *life* consists of!" she remarks (77).

For all her sense of awkward strangeness when she is out on the streets, for all the hesitancy of her voyage, there is a profoundly different woman here. Her changing sexuality and her commitment to writing have little to do with the satisfactions of a specific relationship or the successes of a particular literary exercise. "Lately it seemed so senseless to discuss the book with anyone. . . . Her narrative sources had grown silent. Lately there came hardly a clue from the things she was working on" (78-79). Accepting the odd and difficult moments of life as she does, Stefan notes a dry stage in the writing process with confidence: it is a necessary phase in her life-long project of writing the self.

This Feminist Press edition of Johanna Stegleider Moore and Beth E. Weckmueller's 1978 translation of *Shedding* is accompanied by Johanna Albert and Tobe Levin's translation of Stefan's sketches of her lesbian community life in a country village *Literally Dreaming* (1987). Stefan writes:

ment and a form and a name; I walked into the winds, following the clouds into the glistening shoals, that was a day's work. (114)

The detail-driven sensibility that Stefan brought to her earlier self-examinations is focused here on nature: a rural world of pesticide-free (therefore snail-infested) gardening, neighborly visits, and the slow hard labor of house renovations. This collection, a journal of the tough realities of country living with separation from men a fact is hardly a match to the sharply radical negations of *Shedding*.

The women of *Literally Dreaming* also take off for Crete. The island is a beloved and inevitable source for these German feminists who would sweetly dream of goddesses in their search for a matriarchal depth to their own farmland surroundings and everyday lesbian lives. Although the daily details are dense, this is the least accessible of Stefan's texts. Its feminist vision is inconclusive. In *Shedding* the impulses toward spiritual growth were rooted in the consequences of social refusal; but for all its mythical longings, *Literally Dreaming* remains earthbound, unable to fire the imagination.

Stefan understands this problem herself in "Euphoria and Cacophony" translated by Tobe Levin (1994). Looking back on her work and its reception she writes:

My books are corporeal books. *Shedding* concerns the female and the male, and the female and the female bodies. . . . In *Literally Dreaming* I deal with terrestrial bodies: wood, flowers, animals, lesbians, and materials like cement, mortar, brick, plaster, and paper. (147)

The two essays complete the collection with a useful review of German feminist literary production in the last two decades and a contrasting reflection of Stefan's individual experience during that time as Germany's most widely read and most personally exposed feminist writer. Her own problems with fame provide the final ironic touch: "It doesn't matter where I go, Verena Stefan is right on my heels" (138).

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J. P. Stern. *The Dear Purchase: A Theme in German Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Pp. xxii + 445.

Anglo-American literary studies owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the wave of Central European émigrés driven to our shores by Hitler. Motivated by the desire to win new audiences, to attain a more critical

understanding of the European culture left behind, and to serve as mediators of that culture in their new lands, they contributed some of the most trenchant and stylish scholarship and criticism in English during the decades following World War II. (Succeeding generations, notably from Germany, have in contrast made no mark on the Anglo-American consciousness, writing almost exclusively as they do in German and for German readers.)

Among these émigrés, none contributed more profoundly to our understanding of nineteenth and twentieth-century German literature than J. P. Stern and his fellow-Czech, Erich Heller. The resemblances between the two friends are remarkable: cultivating an English style that is the envy of native speakers and favoring the critical essay as their preferred mode of expression, they returned obsessively to a cluster of seminal figures including Nietzsche, Spengler, Kafka, Rilke, and Thomas Mann in their effort to come to grips with the mystery of Central Europe in the age of modernism: Heller in *The Disinherited Mind* (1952) and subsequent works and Stern in an extensive critical oeuvre culminating in *The Dear Purchase*, which was completed only days before his death in 1991 and readied for publication by Sheila Stern and Nicholas Boyle.

This volume is both figuratively and literally the culmination of Stern's critical project—he first introduced the title and theme in a lecture almost 40 years ago (1957). The introduction is specific about Stern's aims and methods. Inspired to his essayistic approach by Heller's *The Disinherited Mind* and guided by Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* in weaving chosen texts into a coherent history, Stern appropriated from his Cambridge friend Ludwig Wittgenstein the notion of "family resemblances" to designate "a range of overlapping similarities" that characterize the dominant figures of German literary modernism.

The rather cryptic title comes from a sonnet by the Baroque poet Andreas Gryphius, who states that Christ's salvation is offered to mankind "ohn teuren Kauf" (without dear purchase). It is Stern's thesis that the major achievements of modern German literature are also concerned with man's salvation—a salvation achieved, however, at considerable moral cost and suffering. He offers as the simplest example the act of self-sacrifice as a result of which, in Brecht's *Mutter Courage*, Katrin is shot when she saves the inhabitants of a village from marauding soldiers. Such salvation through supreme effort, he argues, constitutes the theme closest to the temper of an age of bewilderment that—after Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud—has become convinced that the old values—religious, philosophical, social, psychological—no longer hold true. The new reality that these moderns seek to acquire through their "dear purchase" is that "higher reality" that Hegel distinguished from "mere" reality—a problematic, precarious state of being that Rilke, in his Tenth Elegy, describes as the Land of the Laments lying beyond the tawdry marketplace of quotidian reality: "gleich dahinter ist's wirklich."

The book consists of a series of extensive readings of 14 individual works, loosely linked thematically. The awareness of the new relativism produced by the intellectual discoveries of the *fin de siècle* is the common denominator linking Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, and Robert Musil's *Man without Qualities*. It is the Great War that claims the ultimate sacrifice in the autobiographical accounts of Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel* and Hans Carossa's *Roumanian Diary* and in the great war poems of Stefan George ("Der Krieg") and Georg Trakl ("Grodek"). The chapter on poetry, rather than focusing on specific works, takes a longer view: the theme of gain achieved by loss in Rilke's poetry; the strenuous depiction of the "toxic spheres" of modern life in the poems of Gottfried Benn; and Bert Brecht's insistence on the need for social engagement. Hermann Hesse's *Glass Bead Game* and Mann's *Doktor Faustus* are analyzed as works "rendering account" of a world in which salvation and freedom can be purchased only through enormous existential effort: Joseph Knecht's death at the end of Hesse's utopia and Adrian Leverkühn's decision to accept illness and death as the price of genius. In contrast to these examples of the moral theology of strenuousness, Stern offers in conclusion two works in which a deliverance of sorts is suggested: the comic irony of Mann's *Felix Krull* and the joyful consolation of artistic immortality achieved at the end of Kafka's *Josephine the Singer*.

Stern's magisterial undertaking has its shortcomings. The hazy notion of "dear purchase" as the defining characteristic of German modernism would have emerged more sharply had the author contrasted his German examples with European analogies: Yeats and Stefan George, for instance, or Toynbee and Spengler, Malraux and Jünger, or D. H. Lawrence and Thomas Mann. How does Churchill's demand for "blood, sweat, and tears" differ from Hitler's litany of sacrifice, which Stern analyzed brilliantly in his 1975 book on Hitler's rhetorical appeal and which recurs again here? Some of the material—e.g., the chapter on *Doktor Faustus*, which is identical with Stern's 1973 inaugural lecture at University College London—needs updating in the light of recent studies. The postscript is conspicuously fragmentary. In this book the sum of the parts is greater than the whole.

That being said, however, no critic of German literature, modern or other, writes more brilliantly, more provocatively, or engages us more fully in his enterprise. Stern's writing is never easy: he demands our total concentration. The book reflects the brooding of a lifetime—since his early study of Ernst Jünger (1952)—on a cohort of representative and major writers. The text sparkles with challenging critical evaluations. The striking juxtapositions of writers—Spengler with Mann and Musil, or Brecht with Rilke and Benn!—in themselves bear witness to the originality of a magnificent critical intelligence.

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Ellen E. Berry and Anesa Miller-Pogacar, eds. *Re-Entering the Sign: Articulating New Russian Culture*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995. Pp. Xi + 364.

The aim of this collection is to give Western readers a taste of the wide-ranging debate among contemporary Russian scholars and artists over the nature and significance of the cultural changes that have marked their nation's decade-long transition towards an uncertain post-Soviet future. The two dozen authors represented include film makers; writers of prose and poetry; critics of literature, art, cinema, and theatre; journalists; and academic specialists in philosophy, musicology, linguistics, and cultural semiotics. Some have contributed scholarly articles, others informal essays, transcripts of conference papers, and even poetic texts and artistic manifestos. Most appear here in English for the first time.

All of these contributions are, in the words of co-editor Ellen E. Berry, evidence of the re-entry of Russian society into "its own historical conversations as well as larger global conversations about culture." Despite the inevitable diversity of voices in any such conversation or conversations, readers might wish the editors had narrowed their focus. Especially for those unfamiliar with the complexities and cultural specifics of contemporary Russian society, the comments and background material offered by Berry in her afterword and by Anesa Miller-Pogacar in her introduction are insufficient to bridge the disparities of topic, genre, and approach. Berry does make an impressive attempt to identify the common concerns of her contributors, but her main interest—the crucial question of Russian postmodernism—is only obliquely reflected in most of the essays at hand. Miller-Pogacar's rather diffuse introduction, while it succeeds in bringing out important links between post-Soviet cultural thought and that of the immediate pre-revolutionary period, fails to substantiate its claim of a common "culturological" approach among the writers represented here.

Essays that most directly engage the problem of Russian culture as a whole are grouped in Part One under the heading "Culture and Society." Parts Two and Three deal with literature and cinema, respectively. Opening Part One, Mikhail Epstein's "The Origins and Meaning of Russian Postmodernism" stands out, not only by virtue of its sophisticated application of current Western cultural theory (Arkady Dragomoshchenko's "The Shadow of Reading" in Part Two drops more names, but with much less effect), but also by the depth and originality of its observations. Along with texts such as Epstein's, and those of Viacheslav Kuritsyn ("Postmodernism: The New Primitive Culture") and Grigory Tulchinsky ("Culture and Mythocracy"), the editors could have chosen from a number of similar recent attempts at global cultural analysis from a postmodern perspective, and come up with a much more coherent book.

In contrast, Abraam Iusfin's "Musical Aspects of Anthropoecology" and Georgy Gachev's "National Images of the World" appear, despite their provocative arguments, to have little to do with the question of Russian culture per se. A different problem (again, more a question of relevance than of quality) is presented by articles such as Elena Stishova's "Look Who's Here! A New Trend in Soviet Cinema" in Part Three. The papers collected in this volume are five years old on the average. Some reflect post-Soviet reality, and others anticipate it; but a few authors, such as Stishova, are clearly operating in a pre-transition framework, both in terms of subject matter and mode of thought.

Still, even in the post-1991 essays, the real bone of contention is rarely the present historical moment, described as it is in terms of losses or potentials (e.g., the spiritual, ideological, and technological "triple zero" of Mikhail Zolotonosov's "The Fountain at Rest: A Small Monograph on Postsocialist Realism"). It is rather the evaluation of the Soviet past that preoccupies contemporary Russian cultural studies. Only now can one look back with objectivity; only now can one "re-enter the sign." This is the premise of both the editors of this collection and most of its contributors. The lie of Soviet existence not only precluded objectivity but was so total as to destroy history, memory (e.g. Ilya Kabakov's "On Emptiness"), and the very possibility of ethical choice. The ideological core of this existence, for Epstein, was only a Baudrillardian simulation of reality, and ideology "did not lie; it was the real world itself that tended to disappear and to dissolve in ideological signs."

It is not for an outsider to determine to what degree the totality of Soviet ideology denied its victims the ability to distinguish between reality and unreality. But it is not true that history stopped for 70 years and began again only yesterday. Berry and Miller-Pogacar's essayists are representatives of the Russian intelligentsia; traditionally, these are the people who (as opposed to the peasants) would create their nation's history—if they were allowed to. It is suspicious (if not surprising) that so many *intelligently* scoff at both the dissidents of yesterday and the democrats of today. In order to escape the burden of political participation that the traditional definition of their role would now seem to demand, some even point to the liquidation of the intelligentsia as a class with the demise of the USSR. Meanwhile, we pat the post-intelligentsia culturologists on the head for their enthusiasm in adopting our esoteric way of thinking, forgetting that the culture debate in Russia is not an esoteric, academic debate; it is of political importance, and we are obliged to take a stand—unless we prefer Zhirinovsky.

Rolf Hellebust

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Victor Erlich. *Modernism and Revolution: Russian Literature in Transition*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard UP, 1994. Pp. 414.

As stated in the Introduction to his book, Victor Erlich's study is "a product of many years of teaching and pondering Russian poetry, artistic prose and literary criticism of the first three decades of this century." Although the book dealing with the interrelationship of Russian modernism and the Bolshevik Revolution focuses mainly on the Soviet 1920s, some of its chapters go way beyond the first decade of Soviet letters, spanning, in some individual cases, the period of almost 40 years.

The main body of the book consists of 13 chapters, each one of them dealing with a specific literary movement or an individual author. In the Introduction to the book, Erlich makes an attempt to formulate a working definition of modernism, only to come to the conclusion that this "elusive and protean" term can not be clearly defined: at best one can identify some of its characteristics, such as radical departure from recent cultural heritage, the cult of novelty, liberation of poetic language, form-consciousness and the extensive use of parody, pastiche, and stylization. Erlich also notes that the modernists' spirit of innovation and their passionate desire to break away from the stifling status quo made them so receptive to radical political thinking.

In the first chapter of the book Erlich portrays the Russian Symbolism of the pre-revolutionary decade not as a precursor of Russian modernism, but rather as its first wave. Yet, the aesthetic aspects of Symbolism *qua* modernism interest the author the least; he is more concerned with Bely and Blok's half-fearful, half-hopeful expectation of the Revolution which would sweep away the corrupt old world, and Vyacheslav Ivanov's restrained scepticism about the Revolution's ability to bring about a genuine spiritual regeneration of Russia. That might be the reason why Erlich ignores such an important concept of the "younger" Symbolists' artistic thinking as "life-creation," which prefigured, in some ways, the purpose of art as "life-building" proclaimed by the leaders of *Lef* a decade later.

Chapter II, which discusses the artistic and philosophical dimensions of Russian Futurism, combines an astute revision of existing scholarship on the subject with some thought-provoking personal insights. Although the author pays some attention to Khlebnikov, Burlyuk, and Shershenevich, the main focus of his analysis is placed on the early Mayakovsky, whose career "epitomizes . . . the precarious and short-lived alliance between esthetic and political radicalism in 20th-century Russia." Unfortunately, Erlich's analysis of Mayakovsky's works is based upon a rather colorless

translation of his poems, which does not convey the verbal re-
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The same can be said about the next chapter, in which the author manages to squeeze the poetic *œuvre* of A. Akhmatova, O. Mandelstam, B. Pasternak, and M. Tsvetaeva into approximately 20 pages. The result of this compression is a rather tedious collection of common places, adding very little to a generally informed reader's knowledge of the four masters in question.

Similarly, the next 10 pages dealing with Formalism and the Proletkult fail to break new grounds or to offer new insights. The brief sketch on Russian Formalism represents little more than an abridged version of Erlich's own brilliant book on the subject (complete with the same quotation from Jean Cocteau), whereas a few words on the Proletkult, *On Guard*, and *Red Virgin Soil* do not go beyond what an average student of the Soviet 1920s already knows.

Chapters V and VI are devoted to the prose writers of the 1920s, directly or indirectly influenced by A. Bely and A. Remizov: E. Zamyatin, K. Fedin, and B. Pilnyak (L. Leonov and his highly modernistic *The Thief* are conspicuously missing in this pleiad). While the detailed paraphrasing of *The Islanders* and *We* does not add very much to our knowledge of Zamyatin, the parallel between K. Fedin's *Cities and Years* and V. Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize* constitutes one of the most rewarding sections of the book. It should still be pointed out that the proclivity towards building a melodramatic plot based upon the heart-breaking conflict between the deep sense of duty ("man has to do what he has to do") and personal feelings ("I love this class enemy") is generally characteristic of the Soviet prose of the 1920s, thriving on the rich material of the recent fratricide war (A. Tarasov-Rodionov's *Chocolate*, I. Ehreburg's *The Life and Death of Nikolai Kurbov*, B. Lavrenyov's *The Forty First One* to cite but a few). Moreover, if we use intertextual perspective, as does Erlich, then it should be noted that this type of conflict, with its necessary tragic *denouement*, owes much more to Neo-Classicism than it does to French Romantics.

Erlich provides a very sophisticated and insightful reading of B. Pilnyak's *The Bare Year*, although some of his observations produce a nagging effect of *déjà vu*. One wonders, however, whether Erlich has ever read (or recently reread) Pilnyak's highly sarcastic and pessimistic *Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea*, in which he speaks about "hyperbolically celebratory tenor" of this "socialist construction novel," unless we are dealing with a totally different work having the same title.

Isaak Babel is one of the few authors whom Erlich investigates very thoroughly, both in terms of their literary technique and their ambivalent attitude towards the harsh realities of the Revolution. It is insufficient, however, to state, as does the author of *Modernism and Revolution*, that Babel's "detached" representation of violence is merely an attempt to repress the unbearable pain of confronting "ferocious cruelty"; on the reception level, violence perpetrated with business-like efficiency is made

more horrible than when it is depicted empathetically as something monstrous (L. Tolstoy preceded Babel in the use of this technique in the finale of *Hadji-Murat*). On the other hand, although Erlich tries to circumscribe the voice-structure of Babel's *Red Cavalry* stories, his analysis does not go deep enough. Thus, when, in "Gedali," the old shop-keeper speaks about "the International of good men," in which "every soul should be listed and given first-category rations," it is the narrative voice of Babel the Red Army Commissar that the reader hears, and not that of a home-grown philosopher from Zhitomir who, realistically speaking, cannot tell the difference between the first- and second-category rations.

Erlich is much more discerning when he discusses the dynamics of relationship between the narrator and the authorial voice in M. Zoshchenko, whose works he investigates very thoroughly. One might be surprised, however, that on the 14 pages covering almost the entire career of this prominent Russian satirist Erlich could not find enough space for Zoshchenko's *The Blue Book* (1936), a cynical and pessimistic portrayal of human nature, which would certainly answer the critic's puzzling question about Zoshchenko's "belief" in Progress and Reason. It could also elucidate the question concerning "the face beneath the mask," since in *The Blue Book* the narrator is almost identical with the author. Erlich is at his best when he uses his vast knowledge of Russian (and not only Russian) literature in order to put Zoshchenko's *œuvre* in a broad intertextual perspective: the parallel he draws between Zoshchenko's *Youth Restored* and Gogol's *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* is remarkably perceptive and refreshing.

Erlich's impressive erudition serves him well when he identifies some references to Saltykov-Shchedrin in A. Platonov's *The Town of Gradov*. The rest of the chapter on Platonov is, however, rather disappointing: more often than not, Erlich's analysis does not go beyond mere rehashing of plot or, at very best, does not expand or elaborate on what has already been done in the area of Platonov scholarship. Some inaccuracies, both substantive and editorial, may cause additional disappointment. Thus, Erlich claims that Platonov's early stories "Heirs to the Sun," "Markun" and "The Ethereal Tract" "strike a note of technological Prometheanism," whereas, in fact, they are more of a warning about the destructive potential of technological progress. On the other hand, transcribing the names of Platonov's characters as *Pyusya* instead of *Piyusya* and *Gamushkin* instead of *Ganushkin*, and calling his famous book of short stories *The River Pokudan* instead of *The River Potudan* does not bear witness to a very attentive reading of one of the most original Russian writers of the twentieth century.

Another insignificant, but still factual, has sneaked into the chapter on Platonov. Erlich defines *literatura fakta* as "the hybrid half-fictional,

half-documentary narrative mode." In reality, there was nothing "fictional" about Tretyakov and Chuzhak's concept of factography at all: they were adamantly opposed to fiction (*vymysel*), favoring instead the genre of reportage (*ocherk*), where the actual facts had to be arranged in what they called *factomontage*, created with the purpose of "life-building".

This inaccuracy is partly redeemed, however, by Erlich's brilliant investigation of V. Shklovsky's prose, in which the leading Russian Formalist appears not only as an astute critic, but as an inveterate humanist as well. Moreover, Erlich's comparative study of Shklovsky's *Zoo* and Mayakovsky's *About That* provides very useful insights into the artistic world of both towering figures of Russian modernism. On the other hand, Erlich's highly sophisticated analysis of V. Kaverin's *The Brawler* and *Author Unknown* in relation to Shklovsky and the fate of Formalism, compensates generously for the sketchiness of the preceding chapter on Formalism (Ch. IV).

By contrast, very little of what Erlich says about Y. Olesha and I. Ehrenburg adds anything substantial to the existing body of scholarship on these authors. One can only wonder, among other things, what made Erlich retell all Ehrenburg's novels of the 1920s, which, with the exception of *Julio Jurenito*, have very little to do with modernism and are only distantly related to the subject matter of the book.

Some of the statements Erlich makes at the end of his book seem ill-thought and unsubstantiated. He claims, for example, that "by 1930 combining avant-garde technique with political message was no longer possible." Nothing is farther from the truth. In his *Time, Forward!* (1932) V. Kataev managed to embody the idea of "socialist emulation" in a highly modernistic, cinema-like *montage*, whereas his *Lone White Sail* (1936), a captivating story of the revolutionary activities in Odessa in 1905, still bears the deep traces of the ornamentalism of the 1920s. The film *Chapaev* by the Vasilyev brothers (1934), on the other hand, still reveals a strong influence of S. Eisenstein's pioneering cinematographic techniques.

It is also erroneous to consider the year 1930 a cut-off line representing the end of modernism in Russian letters and visual arts, as does Erlich. Although modernism disappeared almost entirely from the mainstream literature of the 1930s, it found refuge in some marginal genres, such as historical novels and novellas, and "literature for children." Suffice it to mention here A. Vesoly's ultra-modernistic *Guliy, Volga* (1932), Y. Tynyanov's *The Wax Figure* (1932), and his *The Young Vitushishnikov* (1933). Even Tynyanov's later novel *Pushkin* (1936-37) is still reminiscent, in terms of its style and structure, of the author's early avant-garde novels, such as *Kyukhlya* (1925) and *The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar* (1929). Whatever Erlich might say about Shklovsky's *Diary* (1939), the latter's brilliant essay on Tynyanov's *Pushkin*, published in that edition, is still vintage Shklovsky, and the veteran Formalist of the 1920s is easily rec-

ognizable in his book on Dostoevsky (1957), whose merit was, among other things, to reintroduce Bakhtin to the students of Russian criticism.

A few words should be added apropos the style of the book. It is written in a very colorful, convoluted, highly latinized English prose, reminiscent of Erlich's book on Gogol (albeit not as obscure). The readability of the book is adversely affected, however, by the author's excessive use of French expressions, especially when they are inserted for purely decorative purposes and rendered incorrectly (Erlich is not exactly at home with this language). Some Francophiles might be annoyed, for example, by the phrase *cri de coeur* (instead of *cri du coeur*) occurring four times in the text. Contrary to what Erlich believes, the French for "crime of passion" is not "*crime de passion*," but rather *crime passionnel*, and *le sens de l'absolu* would please French grammarians much more than Erlich's *le sens d'absolu*.

All the above limitations notwithstanding, Victor Erlich's *Modernism and Revolution* can be recommended, with some reservations, as a useful additional reading for the survey courses on Russian literature of the twentieth century.

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Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow, eds. *A Dialogue of Voices: Feminist Literary Theory and Bakhtin*. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 1994. Pp. 207.

Dialogue of Voices joins the growing community of feminist theorists responding to the challenge that is Bakhtin. Despite the resonances of alterity and otherness, the mutual recognition of a need for non-hierarchical reciprocity, there is no easy match between the two, for both voices, Bakhtinian and feminist, speak from their own states of creative diversity. The essential gap that must be preserved lest dialogue collapse into fusion is in this volume maintained and explored. Bakhtin's perceived lack of interest in gender is noted not to berate his "deafness," but to critically assess his distance from the feminist project. His legacy is treated here as an "internally persuasive word" to be "appropriated" and "reaccentuated," reclaimed for "contemporaneity" ("Discourse in the Novel"). The feminist appropriation of Bakhtin has its own agenda, squarely addressed by the editors. The task of carving out a space for woman's writing in a masculinist past and present, of reclaiming the female speaking subject from the margins of silence, object-status, and otherness is to be served by Bakhtin's insight that all authoritative discourse can constitute itself only by pretending to ignore the other voices that surround and invariably af-

fect, infect, and resist it. Feminists who write *masculine* into authoritative discourse and *feminine* into the enabling but irrepressible other “voices,” who rewrite the delusion of ignoring into deliberate silencing, take Bakhtin into politicized waters he chose not to test, at least not from the perspective of the liberal-humanist, ungendered, and anti-activist appropriation project now being carried out in his name in his homeland. These departures were pointed out by Emerson in “Bakhtin and Women: A Nontopic with Immense Implications” (1993), of interest (particularly to the essentialist debate) for the contention that Bakhtin preferred to work at differences that are posited, to be constantly re-negotiated, rather than those that are given (in which category Emerson includes gender). That challenge is bypassed here, as is, perhaps inevitably, the larger picture, again pointed out by Emerson, of the wonderfully inconsistent but resolutely focused Bakhtin in life-long dialogue with himself (traced in Emerson’s and Morson’s *Creation of a Prosiacs*), from the earlier ethical studies (some available in English translation in *Art and Answerability*), to the later metaphysical notes (in *Speech Genres*). The problem of authorship, its responsibility/answerability to self and other, the interanimation in great time of past, present, and future—these are the issues that set the “dialogizing background” for the middle-period works best known to Bakhtin’s Western appropriators, feminist and others, issues that await the testing and contesting of feminist theory.

They are also issues broached if not named as such in *A Dialogue of Voices*. Great time surrounds and surmounts the disruption of carnival—once the narrow if stimulating focus of subversive readings of Bakhtin, now soberly reassessed in this volume. Hohne and Wussow question its “quick fixes” and binarist inversions; Gasbarrone through her re-evaluation of Cixous’s “Laugh of the Medusa” notes a turning deaf to the past that lends an non-dialogic thrust to even “Epic and Novel”; Ty examines not just the simple, temporary inversion of high and low but their hybridization in category romance, with its unstable combinations of genres past (classical literature, theology, gothic novels) and present (from advertising to Hollywood movies); Heikinen removes carnival from the timeless public square to the all too historically present prison cell of Puig’s *Spider Woman*. Shumway’s postulating a chronotope of the asylum reverberates with the ages of madwomen in the attic; it re-infuses what has become in too many hands a critical tag with its true and timely dynamic of becoming, the space within and without that the speaking subject carries with her on her tightrope walk between the heteroglossia of a patriarchal world and the autolect, the discourse of madness in its victims. From the collection as a whole emerges a diversity of and dialogue with time as period, genre, and a critical awareness of the differences to be met in the era addressed in each text. Encompassed are sixteenth-century lyric poetry (James on Pernette du Guillet), nineteenth-century British gothic (Craig

on *Frankenstein*, Shumway on *Jane Eyre*) and marriage plots (Schaffer on *Sense and Sensibility*), and, from this century, ballads in post-treaty Ireland (Cullingford on Yeats's Crazy Jane cycle), American nature writing and ecofeminism (Murphy), category romances (Ty), liturgical dance and sermonizing (purvis-smith), and Latin American metafiction (Heikinen).

Gasbarrone finds in Bakhtinian exotopy and genial laughter a "necessary corrective" to what she has come to see as Cixous's dialogue of "self to self" and rhetoric of violent struggle; Cullingford discovers a "utopian generosity" of satiric laughter, an "enabling methodology" for inscribing class as well as gender into the ethic of transgression. To purvis-smith Bakhtin offers a way out of the Hobson's choice between silence and the compromised word; to Murphy—a reconceptualization of alienated otherness into relational otherness. Craig's recuperation of the excluded feminine voice involves a crossing of Bakhtin and Irigaray to create a "specular feminist dialogics." Here dialogics is seen as a process of self-constitution, taken into the social sphere (Bakhtin's essential "externalization") by Ty, who reads carnivalesque masking as the plurality of identities dialogically assimilated, exploited and resisted by the contemporary woman. Assimilated political and gendered discourse, their dialogic, unresolved confrontation with a ventriloquized 'academic' objectivity is the focus of Heikinen's study; whereas Schaffer treats dialogue on the level of genre, sentimental and realistic, in Austen's "bi-directional satire" of the limitations encountered by women in both scenarios. James challenges Bakhtin's relegation of lyric verse to the category of the monologic, implicitly drawing on the latter's notion of novelization as a process that invades the larger dialogue of genre in various periods, including the Renaissance ferment studied in her article.

To Bakhtin, hell was not "les autres," but the "absolute lack of being heard" (*Speech Genres*). It is to be hoped that the feminist dialogics pursued in *A Dialogue of Voices* will receive a dialogic—considered, critical, and responsive—hearing.

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Irene Masing-Delic. *Abolishing Death: A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth-Century Literature*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992. Pp. Viii + 363.

During the first three decades of this century—Russia's era of revolutionary fervor—the common conviction of radicals of every political stripe was that there were to be no limits on the transformations that would be undergone by the New Man. Even for the most material-minded Bolshevik, revolution was rarely a mere matter of economics. The great ambi-

tion, spoken or unspoken, was that social and technological changes would finally lead to biological improvements in the species itself. Heaven itself was within reach.

Abolishing Death is the first book to examine the literary reflections of the ultimate revolutionary dream: a secular apotheosis, born from a combination of scientific miracle and mystical humanism. Irene Masing-Delic has labored over a decade on this important topic, and her book shows a mastery of both the philosophical foundations of the immortalization project and its multifarious representations in Russian literature from 1900 to 1930. The philosophers (Fyodorov and Solovyov) and artists (Gorky, Sologub, Blok, Ogniov, and Zabolotsky) discussed here appear to believe equally in the power of reason and the power of magic. Their paradoxical take on the traditional Russian *dvoeverie* (dual faith) should prove fascinating reading for non-Slavists and specialists alike.

Masing-Delic points to the waning of traditional religious beliefs in late in late nineteenth-century Russia as the primary motivating factor behind the developments described in her book. For her most original contention, though, she goes back to the beliefs of quite a few centuries earlier. The rational/mystical approach of the immortalizers and their doctrine of salvation through secret knowledge recall the doctrines of Gnosticism. Using gnostic categories, Masing-Delic is able to construct a detailed "salvation program" that, she asserts, informs the work of the writers discussed, despite their superficial ideological differences. This program begins with a general critique of the Old World, a description of its negative deity, the Demiurge, and a categorization of mortal mankind according to its gnostic competence. It goes on to anticipate the nature of immortal mankind, of the True Deity it will create for itself, and of the New World in which it will live.

As one might imagine, these six parameters are most transparently applied to the work of writers whose own thinking resembles that of the Gnostics. The case in point is the Symbolist Fyodor Sologub, whose trilogy *A Legend in the Making* "establishes an alchemist formula for metamorphoses in which bestial men become gods and earthly zoological gardens are changed into Gardens of Eden." Masing-Delic's search for analogous metamorphoses in Aleksandr Blok's masterpiece *The Twelve* is more problematic. (How seriously does the poet expect us to consider the vulgar Katka's resurrection as Jesus Christ?) But then Blok's poem is more resistant to interpretation than Sologub's fairy tale. Sologub is himself less openly programmatic than the socialist Maksim Gorky, represented here in his early, god-building stage—or the curious minor writer Nikolai Ogniov, whose "Soviet gothic prose" constitutes the focus of one of Masing-Delic's most interesting chapters.

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Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman, eds. *Creating Life. The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994. Pp. 288.

It has been a real pleasure to read this timely collection of essays on Russian Modernism even when, as in the case of Irene Masing-Delic's tour de force, "Creating the Living Work of Art: The Symbolist Pygmalion and His Antecedents," there is perhaps an almost too intense identification with the subject

Irina Paperno's "The Meaning of Art: Symbolist Theories," which opens the collection, is a lucid analysis of Symbolist aesthetics emphasizing the centrality of concept of the idealization of the poet in Russian Symbolism and, with it, the belief in the transfigurative power of poetry to create a viable alternative to life as we know it, which is the central motif of the collection.

Olga Matich's "Symbolist Meanings of Love" then gives us a very insightful appreciation of the Symbolist erotic imagination and the ensuing existential *ménages*.

Alexander Lavrov's "Andrei Bely and the Argonauts' Mythmaking," which is based on new archival sources, is, it seems to me, an objective and *sensible* analysis of the Symbolist mentality caught in the process of "mythmaking" (91), a "spiritual condition" (92) which is likened to "behavior . . . akin to the actions of fairy-tale heroes in magical space" (93). The Argonaut experience, which captured something intrinsic to the Symbolist psyche, is described by Lavrov as a "myth ideally suited to expressing mystical life-creating desires that were at once bold and extremely inconcrete and undefined" (87). Lavrov's observation that "the lagging of 'art texts' behind 'life texts' observed in Bely's case serves to confirm the subordinate position of the first in relation to the second" is a point well taken. For readers interested in this subject, Lavrov's essay is a most useful attempt to describe the *dérangement* of the senses behind the Symbolist aesthetic.

Joan Delaney Grossman's "Valery Briusov and Nina Petrovskaja: Clashing Models of Life in Art" is a fascinating exposition of how human beings and their relationships were turned into "personal myth" (131) by the Russian Symbolists. Grossman maintains a fine balance between Briusov's and Petrovskaya's incomplete relationship on the one hand and, on the other, a similar incompatibility between Briusov's vision of the function of art as an unending creative process, cosmic—even mystical—in nature, and the Soloieviaevian vision maintained by Viach, Ivanov, Blok, and Bely, with its religious and utopian view of the *socially* transformative power of art.

<https://new.palgravepress.org/stcl/vol21/iss2/10>
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Michael Wachtel's "Viacheslav Ivanov: From Aesthetic Theory to Biographical Practice" shows us intriguing aspects of Ivanov's personal-

ity: how, for example, his personal symbolism invaded autobiography, poetic texts, and even the translation of other poets' work, such as Novalis'; and how Vyach. Ivanov, traumatized by the death of his beloved wife L.D. Zinovieva-Annibal, became a devoted adherent and follower of the occultist A.R. Mintslova, a woman characterized by Wachtel as "not entirely sane" (159) and living "in a fantasy world of her own creation, touching base with reality long enough to post letters and telegrams, an activity she performed with the same indefatigable fanaticism that she brought to her mystical endeavors" (158-59).

Finally, Irina Gutkin's "The Legacy of the Symbolist Aesthetic Utopia: From Futurism to Socialist Realism" gives us a very timely appreciation of the cultural interconnectedness of intellectual currents that went into the making of Russian Symbolism (i.e., V.I. Soloviev, Marx, Nikolay Fedorov, and Nietzsche), and more importantly, the cultural *continuity* that existed between Symbolist and post-Symbolist movements such as Futurism, Marxism, and Socialist Realism, movements which continued, be it in their own way, the idealization of the artists and poets in their quest for a new Man and a new millennium. Gutkin sees the engineering of human souls in Socialist Realism as yet another manifestation of the transformative power of art over life: "As an aesthetic doctrine, socialist realism combined fatefully the principal modernist idea of the transformational relation of art to life with the idea that the experimental artist must subordinate his art and his personality to life" (195). Furthermore, she makes a very important point when she discusses the fact that the Marxist millenarian perspective emphasized and used not only political but also *aesthetic* points of reference inherited from the pre-revolutionary artistic experience.

A few critical comments may now be in order.

There is, for instance, a certain lack of criticism of Symbolist aesthetics in Olga Matich's essay. How can, for example, any "new man" or, for that matter, any "new woman" be created if the reproductive instincts for life are denied? How can V.I. Soloviev's erotic utopia, homoerotic love, celibate marriage, or triangular unconsummated love be "possible alternatives to the biological sex act?" This is hardly feasible life creation. Nor can art come to the rescue; for how can you turn art into life if real life is eliminated? Surprisingly, Schopenhauer's name is nowhere to be found in this essay. His direct and indirect influence through Nietzsche was certainly no longer unfamiliar territory to Russian educated society by the last decade of the nineteenth century.

The interesting cultural connection perceived between Chernyshevsky's utopian thinking and Russian Decadence raised by Matich and studied in depth by Irina Paperno brings me to another point. As Irina Paperno states in her introduction to the volume, "The idealism and mysticism of Russian Modernists rested on a solid positivistic substratum"

(4), by which she means that the radicals of the 1860s transformed Christian metaphors of renewal to suit their own positivistic context, which in turn influenced Russian Symbolist thinking. Thus Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done? From the Tales About the New People* (1863) offered the Symbolists a context "in which the conception of the transformation, or 'transfiguration' of man was carefully encoded in the language of science and social theory" (5).

In her essay proper she writes further: "Russian Symbolists saw their attempts to merge art and life as a revival of romanticism. However they operated in the culture that had passed through and responded to the experience of realism. Realism was worked into their aesthetics" (22). This is a valuable comment in cultural history, but it undercuts the aesthetic reach of realism. Realism was already a crucial component of European Romanticism at the turn of the eighteenth century in its shift from classical aesthetics. In this sense Realism came to the Russian Symbolists by way of the European Romantic revolution, of which, one might say, Chernyshevsky's brand of romantic Realism was itself a part.

Irene Masing-Delic's painstaking analysis of Merezhkovsky's and Sologub's fiction in the context of V.I. Soloviev's "progressive spiritualization of material forms" (62) might have been made more credible by reference to a much more convincing model for human spiritual evolution in the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. And, faced with a discussion of Chernyshevsky's influence on Russian Symbolist writing, this reviewer at least regretted the absence of any reference to Belinsky's romantic criticism, which had come to him by way of Schiller.

In closing, it should be said once again that this collection of essays in toto is a contribution to the study of Russian Modernism. This is due as much to the essayistic nature of the undertaking, which lends itself well to an exploration of Modernist mentality, as it is to the aim of the collection to expand the range of Russian Modernism into the 1930s and Socialist Realism by stressing aesthetic continuity rather than political divergence. The Notes at the end are useful and enlightening and the inclusion of the original Russian texts quoted in the book suggests the care with which both editors and contributors have approached this collection.

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Ernesto Cardenal. *The Doubtful Strait*. Trans. John Lyons. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. Pp. 190.

The English speaking public, especially Americans, have been informed through TV and newspapers of the political events in Nicaragua and its neighbors without knowing much about the countries' past, par-

ticularly about the first years of the Spanish presence in Central America. Cardenal, a Nicaraguan poet, now translated into English by Lyons, gives voice to those distant times. Like chroniclers of the early days, in this epic poem Cardenal has gathered stories to shape into his own version of the events.

The title, *The Doubtful Strait*, which is suggestive even today, refers to the erroneous belief of the first Spaniards that a strait existed in Nicaragua which connected the Atlantic and the Pacific. But the San Juan river, which they believed to empty out into the Pacific, carried them no farther than Lake Nicaragua, which they called the Freshwater Sea: "Pero el Estrecho era de tierra, / no era de agua" 'But it was a Strait of land / it was not of water' (4-5). Such a fallacy, of course, was no different from that of El Dorado or of the existence of Amazon women, which Spanish explorers perpetuated. Cardenal's emotive text calls to mind the Bible and Pound's *Cantos* in its poetic technique. From his work, due to its closeness to history with its intertextual make-up and through the suggestive nature the poet gives it, we could say the poem expresses the concerns common to social poetry of the twentieth century. The poem, in its intent to pull together an epoch of Latin American history, belongs to the same vein as Pablo Neruda's *Canto General*.

The texts of Columbus, Bernal Díaz, Cortés, and others, speaking from the past, blend into diverse narrative voices tied to Cardenal's principal narrative voice to show the forces and motives which changed the course of life for the indigenous people of the New World. In one of the cantos, Cardenal inserts the voice of Columbus with his vision of beauty and virginal wilderness of the new continent: " 'El país es bello . . . / Escogen para gobernadores los más sabios . . . / De la isla Antilla hasta la de Cipango / se cuentan veinte y seis espacios. / Los templos y palacios están cubiertos de oro.' " "The country is beautiful . . . / They choose the wisest as rulers . . . / From the island of Antilla to the island of Cipango / the intervals number twenty-six. / The temples and palaces are faced with gold" ' (2-3). Obviously, the fascination that Columbus had for the new territory is influenced by Marco Polo's descriptions of the kings and castles in Cathay. This vision is mixed with the one of an earthly paradise. This is nothing more than marvel and invention on the part of the Europeans. Such an ideal world of unity is quickly subverted by the greed of the conquistadors like Hernán Cortés, Pedro de Alvarado, Pedrarias: "El Muy Magnífico Señor Pedrarias Dávila / Furor Domini!!! / fue el primer 'promotor del progreso' en Nicaragua / y el primer Dictador / introdujo los chanchos en Nicaragua, sí es cierto . . . / (pero ganado de él) / y el primer 'promotor del comercio' en Nicaragua / (de indios y negros) / a Panamá y al Perú." 'The most Magnificent Pedrarias Dávila / Furor Domini!!! / was the first "promoter of progress" in Nicaragua / and the first Dictator/ he introduced pigs into Nicaragua, yes it's true . . . / (but his own livestock) / and the first "promoter of business" in Nicaragua / (of Indians and negroes) / to Panama and to Peru' (56-57).

Because the riches of the first civilizations to be conquered and their captive Indians were not enough, the Spanish pushed themselves to the limit—some to their death. And not everything is prosperity for them, the voice of the omniscient narrator tells us. At one point, we see the governor Don Pedro de Alvarado asking his majesty the king permission to go discover the lands and islands of the spices. And his majesty gives him permission: “Su Majestad regalaba a Don Pedro de Alvarado / cualquier islas en el mar del Sur de la Nueva España / ‘e TODAS las que halláredes hacia el Poniente della’ ” ‘His Majesty was giving to Don Pedro de Alvarado / whatever islands in the South Sea of New Spain / “and All those you may finde West of there” ’ (88-89). On another occasion we see him going into debt to build ships, dragging his men and his Guatemalan Indians through hardships in the cold climes of the Andes only to find that another Spaniard has arrived before him: “Hasta que llegaron al gran camino de los Incas / y vieron el rastro de los castellanos . . . / La tierra era de Pizarro!” ‘Until they reached the great highway of the Incas / and saw the trail of the Castellians . . . / The land was Pizarro’s!’ (90-91). In these misfortunes that beset the Spaniards we realize that America is not the paradise that Columbus had invented; we see the other side of the coin, the suffering and defeat shown in the land itself: “El Volcán de Quito les arrojaba cenizas desde lejos” ‘From afar the Quito volcano rained ash on them’ (88-89). It is obvious how far they would go for fame, power, and wealth. We see the defeated face of the Europeans.

Cardenal is like the Spanish soldier Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who writes in the sixteenth century to contradict the chronicler López de Gómara, who only reports the victories of Cortés over the Aztecs. Cardenal also writes to contradict the history of grandeur and glory that the conquistadors have taught to the defeated. The poetic truth of the myth permeates throughout the text. Perhaps following the models of the Old Testament, the protean nature of Cardenal’s voice colors each event with omen and prophecy. For example, when the governor of Guatemala dies, the volcano punishes the city incessantly and a flood arises, as if wanting to cleanse all sins and instate a new order. It is not difficult to think of the metaphor applied to the present epoch: it’s as if the poet were telling us that if injustices continue in Central America, something terrible is going to happen there again.

History is seen through the eyes of the present because the abuse of the past has continued up until today. Thus the presence of the colonial governor of Nicaragua Rodrigo de Contreras and his family is somewhat a prefiguration of the dictator Somoza: “LOS PUEBLOS QUE POSEEN RODRIGO DE CONTRERAS E SU MUJER E HIJOS SON: . . . / (Véase COLECCION SOMOZA)” ‘THE TOWNS WHICH ARE OWNED BY RODRIGO DE CONTRERAS AND HIS WIFE AND SONS ARE: . . . / (Cf. SOMOZA COL-
LECTION)’ (414-55). The poetic nature of the text, which pretends to in-

form us about the past, condemns the political situation of the present: the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza and of his family in our immediate past.

In spite of the terrible deeds of the conquering enterprise, the figure of Bartolomé de las Casas stands out as an exception. Cardenal shows us how this friar from Seville denounces before the king the atrocities committed against the Indians and decides to put into practice his theories of attracting the Indians "with words and persuasions" and doing away with coercive methods. But las Casas is not a perfect man, and this is what Cardenal seems to suggest to us when he tells us that las Casas accompanies his persuasion with "tijeras, cuchillos, espejuelos / y otras cosas de Castilla." 'scissors, knives, lenses / and other things from Castille' (118-19). Although the character of las Casas is presented as somewhat positive, Cardenal makes him human. Far from employing any manicheism, the poet permits the reader his own judgment: the suspicion that if the conquistadors came for the gold, the priests came to monopolize the souls.

This text, written at the beginning of the sixties under the advice of Cardenal's mentor and friend José Coronel Urtecho, retains its poetic force in Lyons's successful English translation. The reader unfamiliar with the topography of literature of the discovery and of the colonial times is grateful for Tamara Williams' concise introduction and glossary of names and places which guide us through the reading like compasses. In this poem Cardenal is like a prophet capable of seeing the past and the future to tell us the truth about Nicaragua and Central America. This committed poem, also of high aesthetic caliber, leaves us a moral lesson for the present.

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García Márquez, Gabriel. *Of Love and Other Demons*. Trans. Edith Grossman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. Pp. 147.

García Márquez's latest novel, *Of Love and Other Demons* ends like this: the girl Sierva Maria dies. It's an uncharacteristically tragic and straightforward ending from the author who has given contemporary literature some of its most richly ambiguous icons; to name one: the impecunious colonel who obstinately/ heroically waits a lifetime for a pension check that will never come. The ending of *Demons* is no such two-sided coin: the girl dies. That's it.

The truly bad guys in this book are a bishop and a nun. Their badness, however, is largely institutional. The novel takes more interest in the lesser forms of iniquity represented by the girl's father and her lover-priest. He is Father Cayetano Delaura, an aspiring library curator, who has followed his mentor, a bishop, to the New Kingdom of Grenada. Naturally, he falls in love with Sierva. His lovemaking, however, is unnatural:

like a poet at his poems, like a priest at his prayers—he makes love with words. Nightly, Cayetano steals underground into the convent gaol, where the couple exhaust themselves in kisses, weep burning tears, declaim lovers' verses, sing into each others ears, and "writhe in the quicksands of desire to the very limits of their spent strength: spent, but virgin" (127). The love-making is satisfactorily eloquent until the day that Sierva María implores him to save her from the impending exorcism. Instead of stealing her away, the cleric encourages her to "place her trust in the legal formalities" (135). The girl expires just before the sixth session of those "legal formalities."

As in other García Márquez novels, the immediate story in *Demons* is set against a wartime backdrop. In this case, however, the war is not the recurrent civil war between liberals and conservatives but the war between Europeans and non-Europeans, between Christians and pagans, civilized and uncivilized, literate and illiterate, Spanish speaking and native tongued. It's a messy war. Very few of the characters swear undivided allegiance to one or the other party. Most have antecedents and connections on both sides of the various divides. The novel favors an indiscriminate mixing. The nun is bad because she is pure. Domingo de Adviento, a black woman who became a Catholic without renouncing her Yoruban beliefs, is "healthy and at peace because what she did not find in one faith was there in the other" (11). The European doctor who prescribes happiness is also a good guy.

The novel is a photo album of Viceroyal New Grenada. A fat and asthmatic bishop carried in a sedan chair by government dignitaries is one snapshot, the disfigured and swollen corpses of negro slaves floating on the tide, another. As a mosquito control measure, cowdung burns in royal parlors. Although the album is two centuries old, you can tell that García Márquez took the pictures. Cisterns are cracked. Scenes teem with the exquisite, malarial putrefactions of coastal Colombia; women make the desperate first move; everyone smells of ammonia; on page 13, the animals (in this case, macaque monkeys) go on the obligatory rampage. It's also the end of a century—García Márquez's favorite time of day.

Critics are probably going to say that Márquez's voice and imagination mark the novel's every page but that the effects are lesser than usual. Take, for instance, the dialogue. In other works, Márquez uses the dissonance between speech and occasion (flat speech in a moment of high sentence; grandiloquence when banality would do) to enliven a page and to get at characters' core psychological states. In *Demons*, it just sounds as if the characters talk funny.

Critics will probably also say that the portrayal of Sierva María is deficient. She is, for the most part, just another long-haired 12-year-old: she screams when poked and loves when loved. In the story's critical stages, the novel pays more attention to her father's effete preoccupations and her priest-lover's scurrying than it does to the incarcerated girl's pain. In this

sense, *Demons* reminds one of the concluding episode of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which makes light of the slave Jim's imprisonment while it foregrounds Tom Sawyer's farcical efforts to rescue him. The difference between the two books is that Sierva María doesn't get away. Bled, shorn, and lied to, she loses her will to endure. She dies.

It's a startling ending from the agnostic whose favorite move is the ironic feint, whose surest preachment is found in *Cholera*: "No one teaches life anything." The ending of *Demons* has its ironic grace notes also. Instead of glossing the raw tragedy, however, they only serve to re-enforce it. Cayetano Delauro is no more redeemed nor less of a schmuck because he serves out his days in a leprosarium. And the Church is no less a murderer of innocents because after centuries its faithful venerate the child it has murdered. No, it's clear that García Márquez, who rarely wants to make an unironized point, wants to do so at the end of this novel. He wants to say, beware of the zealous, beware of the churched, fools and ineffectuals are not to be depended upon in critical moments. He wants to say, dogs bite and children die.

John Cussen

University of Cincinnati

Naomi Lindstrom. *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1994. Pp. 246.

Naomi Lindstrom has written an intelligent and useful book. She writes in nontechnical English primarily for an audience who has read Spanish American literature in translation. But this book will also be a useful tool for all teachers and students of Spanish American literature since it provides a brief, coherent overview of the prose fiction of this century without oversimplifying.

The introduction provides a detailed explanation of the mapping out of the book, explaining how and why the inevitable decisions on what to include and what to leave out were made. Lindstrom states her intention "to represent all decades more or less equally," and thus correct the distorted vision sometimes caused by the fame of specific works or the vogue of certain types of writing (2). For example, because of its popularity with critics and international readers, the fantastic, magical modes of writing are often thought to dominate Spanish American literature as a whole, when this is not really the case.

The author rejects both a strictly chronological organization and a region-by-region approach. Instead, she begins by following two principal "tendencies," that she sees as being "in a type of complementary or even interdependent opposition . . ." (9). The first includes works that

stress "a highly visible element of artistry," while the second group of works "gives first place to the depiction of social realities" (9). In order to emphasize that both kinds of literature were being written simultaneously, the first four chapters alternate, i.e., Chapters One and Three treat the "artistic" tendency, while Chapters Two and Four deal with varieties of realism. Chapters Five and Six show how the two tendencies have come together in the latter years of the century. While Lindstrom is quick to recognize that her distinction between two tendencies is somewhat artificial, she points out that both writers and readers tended to see narrative as divided in this way at least through the 1950s. She is particularly interested in how works were received by their contemporaries, and how public perception of them has changed over the years.

Lindstrom seems to assume that most readers' interest in Spanish American fiction stems from familiarity with the works that gained so much international attention during the period popularly called "the boom," the late 1950s and the 1960s, when writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Mario Vargas Llosa published their first, groundbreaking novels. (This assumption is probably a pretty safe bet for English-speaking readers, and even many Spanish-language specialists got "hooked" on Latin American literature by the exciting novels of the boom.) Part of Lindstrom's task, then, is to fill in the context from which these works grew. The boom serves as an organizing principle for the book, in that features of earlier prose are seen as leading to or foreshadowing characteristics now associated with the boom novels, while younger writers are said to "present alternatives to the mode established by the major boom figures" (3). This use of the boom as the literary climax of the century serves to give the book a kind of "plot," and makes for more interesting reading than that provided by most literary histories. Lindstrom repeatedly "telescopes" ahead to show the eventual significance of early efforts, either as progressive steps toward a more satisfactory rendering, or as something against which later authors react.

A spirit of pragmatism pervades the book. Lindstrom does discuss works that should receive more attention than they have, but often bases her selection of what to discuss on the books' fame and availability in translation. Her take on the controversial term "magical realism" is a good example of her practical attitude. She identifies the origin of the term as German art criticism, and credits Venezuelan writer Arturo Uslar Pietri with introducing it to the discussion of Spanish American fiction. Her explanation of "magical realism" is that it involves "the co-occurrence of realism with fantastic, mythic, and magical elements" (87). She adds that narrators "frequently appeared to accept events contrary to the usual operating laws of the universe as natural, even unremarkable" (87). While noting that some scholars reject the term, Lindstrom's own attitude is that of a working critic and teacher:

When academic critics attempted to define *magical realism* with scholarly exactitude, they discovered that it was more powerful than precise. Critics frustrated by their inability to pin down the term's meaning have, in disgust, urged its complete abandonment. Yet in Uslar Pietri's vague, ample usage *magical realism* was wildly successful in summarizing for many readers their perception of much Spanish American fiction; this fact suggests that the term has its uses, as long as it is not expected to function with the precision expected of technical, scholarly terminology. (87)

In contrast to her acceptance of "magical realism" is Lindstrom's rejection of the term "new narrative." She points out that the latter term suggests that little innovation was going on in Spanish American literature before mid-century, a mistaken notion her book does much to refute.

No book can be all things to all people; for each thing this reviewer would have liked done differently, there are advantages to doing it as it stands. As a scholar, I would have liked to see more references cited, especially for statements regarding contemporary public reception of specific works, but too many footnotes are off-putting to the general reader. As a Spanish speaker, I like to read quotes in the original, but bilingual quotes would add useless bulk to a book aimed primarily at an English-speaking audience. Here's hoping that the University of Texas Press follows the lead of Vintage (Random House) and begins publishing appropriate works simultaneously in Spanish and English. Finally, the diligent reader who gets through the book in a day or two will notice some repetitive elements; for example, Lindstrom explains the difference between Spanish American *modernismo* and modernism as understood in English at least three times. But for the teacher thinking about assigning a chapter or two for a specialized course, the repetition of such basic definitions allows the chapters to stand on their own.

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Doris Meyer, ed. *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women Writers of the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Austin: U Texas P, 1995. Pp. 246.

This selection of 21 critical studies, all informed by contemporary feminist theories (ranging from socio-historical to psychoanalytic interpretations), represents a major revision of the canon of the Spanish American essay and rescues work previously excluded from all major existing anthologies of this genre. Some characteristics of the essay as a form, namely its flexibility, exploratory nature, and subjective tone, make it par-

ticularly attractive to feminist discourse. As Doris Meyer points out in her introductory chapter ("The Spanish American Essay: A Female Perspective"), the "essay has lent itself to the expressive needs of a marginalized gender" (4); this observation is confirmed in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century writings examined in this book.

Journalism in all of its different forms (newspapers, magazines, and journals) has played a central role in the development of Spanish American women's essays. Many of the essayists studied in this collection, such as Clorinda Matto de Turner and Gabriela Mistral, just to mention a few, were editors, columnists, and regular contributors in prominent periodicals. As Ardis L. Nelson notes, Carmen Naranjo wrote "over two hundred journalistic articles on a wide range of topics" (186), many of them dealing with Costa Rican Culture. Similarly, Gwen Kirkpatrick's study of Alfonsina Storni's journalistic production emphasizes the way autobiography is mixed with social commentary. She argues that Storni's "roving eye" captures and records "the radical dislocations in gender and familial roles in a rapidly urbanizing environment," in the only venue open to her, the so-called "women's pages" of local newspapers (138).

In addition to journalistic articles or editorials, the essays analyzed in *Reinterpreting* take a variety of forms: memoirs and travelogues (Flora Tristán and the Countess of Merlin); letters and autobiography (Victoria Ocampo); reflections on literature, art, and culture (Magda Portal, Yolanda Oreamuno, Margo Glantz, Elena Poniatowska); literary portraits (Clorinda Matto de Turner and Gabriela Mistral), book-length monographs on politics, history and society (Julieta Kirkwood); hybrid forms that blend different genres such as narrative, fantasy, and feminist theory (Rosario Ferré and Cristina Peri Rossi), as well as the more traditional, brief expository form.

Mary Louise Pratt's "Don't Interrupt Me': The Gender Essay as Conversation and Countercanon," one of the few studies not centered on a specific writer, points out two main "discursive models" that can be useful to describe a major portion of women's essayistic production in Latin America: one takes the form of a "historical catalogue," in which the writer exalts the contributions of intellectual and cultural "foremothers"; and the other, a more general practice, is referred to as "the analytical commentary on the spiritual and social condition of women" (17-18). Regarding the first model, Meyer's "Reciprocal Reflection: Specular Discourse and the Self-Authorizing Venture," provides examples of discursive strategies used by women writing about other women (Sor Juana, Mistral, Ocampo). With respect to the second model, gender-related issues women have frequently written about include education (Rosa Guerra, Amanda Labarca, Mistral, and Storni), feminine sexuality and the erotic imagination (Ferré and Peri Rossi).

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Other recurring topics analyzed in the articles in *Reinterpreting* are those traditionally addressed by male authors in the so-called "criollo iden-

tity essay" (Pratt 23), such as national cultural identity (Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Teresa de la Parra, and Naranjo) and national politics (Eduarda Mansilla de García and Magda Portal). As Meyer and Pratt indicate, by ignoring these feminine voices, important aspects of Latin American intellectual and social history are lost. Majorie Agosin, in "Vision and Transgression: Some Notes on the Writing of Julieta Kirkwood," shows how this sociologist and human rights activist provides a feminist reading of Chilean history that documents the participation and exclusion of women in political and social life; Kirkwood's research, supported by "unpublished documents, flyers, and speeches," theorizes about the connection between political and domestic authoritarianism (211-13).

A common thread in the articles in this volume is the underscoring of a persistent search by Spanish American female essayists for a discursive space from which to write. This is perceived as an urgent need given the silencing and marginalization of women throughout history. Consequently, feminine discourse is presented as contestatory and challenging to the tenets upon which patriarchal society is based. Ironically, as Martha LaFollette Miller suggests in "The Ambivalence of Power: Self-Disparagement in the Newspaper Editorials of Rosario Castellanos," once a position of authority is reached, women sometimes display gender-based ambiguities, self-censorship, and doubt regarding their own access to power through writing. María Cristina Arambel Guifazú notes similar contradictions in Victoria Ocampo's early essays. This type of ambivalence can be largely understood in terms of the internalized anticipation of hostile reactions by a reading public that often discouraged or rejected women's writing.

Meyer rightly observes: "The history of the Spanish American essay must be rewritten to include the contributions of women and their historical circumstances" (7). *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay* and its companion anthology of translations, *Rereading the Spanish American Essay* (also published by U of Texas P in 1995), are significant texts that begin a dialogue between women's contribution to this genre and the continent's intellectual history, alluded to as a "masculine monologue" (Pratt 13). Due to the format of this short review, we have chosen to organize our commentary around some major themes and issues discussed by the critics included in this collection. Since all of the articles are largely consistent in their high-quality, we have only mentioned those articles that best address the broad, general tendencies we have outlined. However, it should be clear that the revindication of the feminine perspective represented by all of the studies, and their tracing of an increasingly liberatory trajectory of women's essays over the last two centuries, are undoubtedly the major contribution of this book.

Judy Maloof and Fernando Unzueta

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Judith Nantell. *The Poetry of Francisco Brines: The Deconstructive Effects of Language*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1994. Pp. 122.

Showing writing as a play of "différance," Judith Nantell's perceptive critical reading of Francisco Brines' poetry focuses on questioning: she examines an inquiry by the poet into three philosophical issues and participates with the poet in a critique of language as a means of illuminating these themes. As Brines questions the nature of knowledge, the present moment, and nonbeing, the poetic voices in his works struggle with "such conflictual differences as knowledge perpetually oscillating with ignorance, the present moment unceasingly becoming past, and human existence endlessly displaying its own finitude" (Nantell 3).

In her analysis of the deconstructive effects of language in poems by Brines, Nantell convincingly details her process of reading and interrogation rather than positing precise answers to the questions raised by the poetry. This approach allows her to view, through a close reading of key poems, the richness of Brines' work in proposing multiple, differing namings and interpretations of knowledge, time, and mortality.

In Chapter I, "Questioning Epistemological Ground," Nantell situates Brines within the context of a group of Spanish poets whose works inquire into the nature of knowledge and the nature of language. She analyzes Claudio Rodríguez's "Alto jornal," from *Conjurados*, José Angel Valente's "Primer poema," from *Poemas a Lázaro*, and Brines' "Esplendor negro," from *Insistencias en Luzbel*, to scrutinize language as "the play of conflictive differences" (19) and to demonstrate "the constant vacillation of meanings" (25) typical of these challenging texts. Nantell's detailed analyses of these poems progress step by step through the reading process, leading the reader to question—along with Rodríguez, Valente, and Brines—"the ground of knowledge, the process of cognitive discovery, and the ground of language" (26).

The critic's study of "Esplendor negro" highlights the scrutiny of knowledge and language that characterizes Brines' poetry. Nantell finds in this poem "a search for the grounds of knowledge" that is at the same time "a critique of both knowing and expressing what is known" (20). Using concepts from deconstruction, the critic shows, for example, that the work of the supplement "undoes the binary opposition *Esplendor / negro*" and that the trace "ensures the constant vacillation of meanings as it subverts the possibility of mastery of knowledge through language" (25). Demonstrating the concept of "différance" in the poem, she concludes that writing, for both the poet and the critic, "is not a way of knowing but rather a means by which the questioning of knowing, meaning, and the
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ambiguity of both the subjects that Brines approaches and the poems that reflect his questioning.

With the mode of inquiry established in the first chapter, the critic in Chapter II, "(Un)Tangling 'The Weave of Time,'" takes on the challenge of unraveling Brines' poems that question the nature of time. The phrase "el tejido del tiempo," from the poem "El triunfo del amor," provides a meaningful description for what Nantell explains as the "entanglement of temporal themes that is Brines' poetry" (28). She examines contradictory views—the "differing and deferring versions of the concept of time" (37)—in numerous poems, including "Un olor de azahar," from Brines' *El otoño de las rosas*. This poem shows particularly well that the present instant of time is always becoming past. Nantell's deconstructive approach illuminates the fleetingness of the present moment by demonstrating that the supplement undoes "the tidy opposition of present/past" (48).

Continuing her unraveling of Brines' complicated weave of time, the critic examines three poems dealing with the town Elca—"Elca," from *Palabras a la oscuridad*, "Elca y Montgó," from *Aún no*, and "Lamento en Elca," from *El otoño de las rosas*. Brines, born in Oliva (Valencia in 1932, states that he spent much of his childhood in Elca. He associates Elca with his growing knowledge of both the external world and the internal world of the self (48). Telling the story of Elca, which has differing versions, Brines' poems emphasize the concept of change within the present moment, suggesting, in Nantell's words, that the temporal instant is "always already ceasing to be" (52). Tracing key words etymologically, she demonstrates that for Brines the present moment is "repeatedly differing from itself" (54), "perpetually engaged in becoming its own *différance*" (56). With a focus on human existence within the weave of time, Brines' poems make the reader aware of "el transcurso del vivir como una continuada pérdida" (Brines, *Selección propia* 19, qtd. in Nantell 62).

In Chapter III, "Differing Substitutions: Naming 'la nada,'" Nantell analyzes Brines' inquiry into the nature of being and nonbeing. Using the Derridean concept of the movement and play of "*différance*," the critic investigates closely the "substitutions, replacements, and displacements" (67) characteristic of the play of signification in Brinesean texts. She begins with a study of "Definición de la nada," from Brines' *Insistencias en Luzbel*, to show the indeterminacy and ambiguity that prevail in his attempt to name "la nada." As Nantell claims, the language of the poem leads not to clarification, but away from a definitive "meaning" for this term. The poetic speakers examine the nature of the finitude of human existence, finding "differing, supplemental namings for 'la nada'" (72) and thus questioning the language used in the inquiry. After analyzing a progression in Brines' examination of nonexistence as observed in his earlier collections of poetry, Nantell studies the substitutive play and the instability of the sign in several poems from *Insistencias en Luzbel* that

treat the finitude of being. Investigating epigraphs in this collection, the critic traces the etymology of the Latin *lucifer* and the differing substitutions associated with the name "Luzbel." Explaining the multiple interpretations of this figure, she underscores the play of differences surrounding this name and explores similar namings and renamings in the multiple attempts at defining "la nada."

The issues of mortality and immortality resurface in poems from *El otoño de las rosas*, where Brines' speakers "undergo and scrutinize the personal act of existing *within* the present moment" at the same time that they experience "personal being ceaselessly becoming non-being" (85). In these texts, the poet's multiple, differing namings of "la nada" once again lead away from a definitive "meaning" of the term.

Demonstrating a thorough knowledge of scholarship on Brines' poetry (in notes and works cited), Nantell focuses on some of the most compelling issues in the poet's work. Her close reading and incisive interrogation of the texts highlight the depth and richness of Brines' work; she also produces the first translations of his poetry into English (to the best of my knowledge). Both Brines' poetry and Nantell's dense, insightful study speak to the complexity of what human existence is. The poems and the critical readings motivate the reader to become ever more conscious of the duplicitous nature of language, as well as the complementarity of knowledge and ignorance, present and past, and mortality and immortality in one's life experience.

Anita M. Hart

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Diana Taylor and Juan Villegas, eds. *Negotiating Performance: Gender, Sexuality, & Theatricality in Latin/o America*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1994. Pp. 356.

Negotiating Performance is a collection of essays co-edited by Diana Taylor and Juan Villegas and born out of a group residency of 11 theater scholars at the University of California's Humanities Research Institute in Irvine during the fall of 1990. The volume contains the 11 essays written by the scholars involved in the workshop along with four additional invited pieces. These particular scholars came together for the workshop because of their mutual interest in theater and, more specifically, U.S. Latino and Latin American drama and performance. They were all academics, all residing in the U.S., and all considered themselves marginalized from Anglo culture for different reasons—ethnic, political, sexual, linguistic. During their period of residency, they determined their common focus to be the negotiation of the "mediation between and with cultures, especially by and regarding problematic terms such as 1) Latino and 2)

performance, and the essential question of whether any "negotiation" among people expressing such differences is possible or even desirable.

As stated in the prologue by Professor Taylor, not every essay in the collection addresses all of the questions involved. Indeed, each essay is unique and fascinating, both for itself and for its relevance to the volume's overall focus. What is intriguing about this volume is that it brings together a diverse group of essays, which as a whole represent an all-inclusive approach to the two terms essential to the cohesiveness of the volume: Latino and performance. The volume stresses difference rather than sameness and the validity of each individual difference. At first glance, there is no apparent overall thematic thread that unifies the essays. A more in-depth perusal of the collection reveals that the main premise is that very diversity characteristic of the kinds of Latino theater being created and performed today throughout the United States and Latin America.

In her prologue, Taylor discusses the problems surrounding the definition of terms and the consensus reached by the scholars during their residency. They established "Latin/o American" to represent an all-encompassing term for 1) persons of Latino origin whose place of residence is the U.S. and 2) Latin Americans who among themselves reflect any number of distinct racial, linguistic, economic and cultural orientations. The rationale for the term was to establish some kind of connection in order "to explore the many worlds, languages, traditions, ideologies and positionalities that coexist . . . and that have, over the centuries, come to constitute *latino américa* across two continents" (9). Secondly, the group felt that the term "theatre," in its traditional, classical sense no longer applied and therefore replaced it with the more practical, open-ended concept of "performance," a "term that allowed us not only to include all sorts of spectacles . . . but to look at theatre itself from a more critical perspective" (11).

The selection of essays, then, represents the ideal of the group to be inclusive rather than exclusive, to expand rather than to restrict boundaries and in doing so to help create a common space which allows for negotiation among divergent national, ethnic, linguistic, gender and sexual issues. Given such a focus, the collection contains 15 completely heterogeneous essays, as will become apparent in the following survey.

Nine of the essays have the problem of gender as their primary focus, but always closely allied with the other dominant issue, that of ethnic identity. Alberto Sandoval's is a compelling essay on AIDS as presented by Latinos in Latino theater and it underscores the diversity of dramatic spectacles representing the health crisis. Marguerite Waller recounts the experience of the multicultural women's group Las Comadres in presenting *Border Boda*, a multimedia dramatic enactment revolving around the problems of "border" relationships. Again, the essay reflects the degree to which the problems presented on stage represent those the artists themselves are attempting to resolve, in this case the question of Chicano identity. Sue-

Ellen Case tackles the representation on stage of Chicana lesbianism, not as separate from but related to the problems all lesbians—white and other—face in today's society. Kirsten Nigro focuses on the work of Rosario Castellanos and two other lesser known Mexican women playwrights as essential to the development of a feminist theater that allows for women to become active agents in the process of change. Accompanying Nigro's approach is that of Jean Franco, whose essay consists in large part of an interview with the Mexican activist and feminist theater actor/director Jesusa Rodríguez, who delights in deconstructing national and universal icons, especially religious ones.

Expanding linguistic boundaries, Cynthia Steele demonstrates in her fascinating essay how indigenous (Mayan) contemporary theater provides a vehicle for expression of female/feminist concerns within the male-dominated theater collective *Sna Itz'ibajom*. Equally legitimate as a kind of performance are the public demonstrations by the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* that, according to Diana Taylor, represent a politics of gender and a redefinition of the role of women in a traditionally patriarchal society. For Judith Bettelheim, Carnival in Cuba provides a site for public performance where images of uninhibited sexuality and ethnic power can be freely expressed. Another essay in which gender is intimately tied to ethnic identity is that of Jorge Salessi and Patrick O'Connor, which gives a colorful and vivid accounting of a drag sub-culture in turn-of-the-century Argentina.

The other essays that deal more generally and primarily with the issue of ethnic identity are equally as diverse and as thought provoking. Place figures as a prominent factor for both María Teresa Marrero and Juan Flores. Marrero focuses on Los Angeles Chicano artist Daniel Martínez and his use of public urban sites as a stage for artistic/political expression. Flores describes the broader significance of the New York Puerto Rican *casitas* (originally workers' shacks), which now function as social and cultural centers and are a form of artistic expression in themselves while still reminiscent of their rural Caribbean roots. The same theater collective that is the subject of Steele's essay is addressed by Donald Frischmann but from a more general perspective, for he focuses on the group's origin and its relationship to the historical, sociological, and political landscape that Chiapas represents. Jorge Huerta makes clear from the outset of his essay that his subject is Chicano theater, rather than Latino or Latin American, and he addresses the problem of Chicanos maintaining their particular identity while at the same time achieving greater visibility for their work on stage through "mainstreaming." Cherrie Moraga's concern is similar in nature, for as a Chicana writer, she is interested in preserving her ethnic identity within a context and continent that is inclusive rather than exclusive, symbolic of a "larger world community" (36).

Perhaps the essay that best synthesizes the concerns and dilemmas of all of the authors involved is the opening one by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "The Multi-Cultural Paradigm: An Open letter to the National Arts Community," in which he emphasizes the need for true multiculturalism to be reflected and respected at all levels of society, both within the United States and south of the U.S. border. Also helpful in understanding the nature and focus of this anthology are the concluding remarks by Juan Villegas, for he reiterates the desire of the contributors to represent as many aspects of cultural diversity as relevant to an accurate portrayal of what today constitutes Latino/Latin American performance. There is neither time nor space here to devote to a detailed analysis of each individual essay. More essential for the reader to grasp is the sense of the whole, that very "diversity of cultural manifestations" which the contributors felt it necessary to underscore (308). Hence, the real value of this anthology lies in presenting just that diversity, in examining the variety and validity of the many different types of contemporary Latin/o American performance and in demonstrating their ultimate interconnectedness without destroying the autonomy and uniqueness of each individual representation. The anthology is highly worthwhile as a vigorous study of the exciting and dynamic activity that is taking place today both in the U.S. and all over Latin America.

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