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Reviews of recent publications

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BOOK REVIEWS

Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 738 pp.

As Barthes once said, the joy of reading Proust lies in skipping different passages: each re-reading thus discloses a different novel. As with *A la recherche du temps perdu*, so with *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, a book that literally begs to be read tangentially (only a reviewer will peruse the text in its entirety) and which, like Proust's novel, dramatizes its own origin. Just as Marcel becomes a writer, so a conference became a book: this text appears as a palimpsest, a re-writing of what the editors call a "specific series of events" which occurred in the summer of 1983 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in conjunction with (or around, depending on whom you talk to) that year's meeting of the Marxist Literary Group—a re-writing necessitated, one would assume, by the diffuse and repetitive format typically adopted by conference organizers, the conflicts of terminology (e.g. in this case the terms "ideology," "culture," even "Marxism"), and the various hermetic or hegemonic individualisms ("star" or not; Anglo, European, or non-Western; Gramscian, Frankfurt-Schooled, or Althusserian) which, together, make the publishing of "conference proceedings" an event much less remarkable than the conference itself. The resulting collection of 37 essays (not including the introduction)—most of which were "very heavily revised" before publication (at least six were solicited *après-coup*)—seems haunted by a repressed group dynamic which actively resists anthologization or (to use the bogey-word of this book) "totalization." The "events" of the conference itself appear as (in) a metaphor for the "absent cause," for the epistemological ground (class struggle? proletarian consciousness? the voice of the subaltern?) or for the final determining instance, crucial notions whose ontological or even conceptual status is clearly contributory to and at stake in the debate over what everyone agrees is the "crisis of marxism." The deliberately unstable synthesis operated by the editors as well as by the textual participants ("the structure of this book is designed . . . to resist offering itself as its own alternative, stable map" ["Introduction," 1]) successfully invites comparison, contrast, and reassemblage, yet occludes (in the double sense of "obstructs" and "absorbs") any *de facto* consensual ground, leading the reader (and many of the essays) to the conclusion that Marxist thought is somehow both behind itself (most contributors agree that the gays, the greens, and the feminists are ahead of current theorizing) and ahead of itself (the most cynical—or realistic?—contributors point out that theory assumes an internationalism at odds with localized developments).

Perhaps the greatest strength of this book can be found in the cogent analyses of hegemonic capitalism, especially in its post-modern articulations. In such a system, two moments of artistic or cultural production, one defensive since striving to resist commodification, the other “utopian” in that it strives to (re)create alternative forms of community, uneasily co-exist. As Fredric Jameson points out, the “space” wherein resistance and re-creation occur, which traditionally was to be found in between the contradictions of capitalism itself, is being “suppressed” and “saturated” (351). Stuart Hall, in the key essay of the book, describes one instance of such a saturation, viz., “Thatcherism,” a “whole discourse” which combines ideological elements into a discursive chain in such a way that the logic or unity of the discourse depends on the subject addressed assuming a number of specific subject positions. [49]

The narrator of Thatcherism succeeds (in speech-act terms, is “felicitous”) thanks to a strategic proliferation of possible narratees; each narratee feels personally addressed. For those who might wonder why Marxism could not make use of such a strategy, well, here is where the greatest weakness of this book emerges: all Hall wishes to do is “understand” this “interpellative process,” even though many other contributors (especially Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chantal Mouffe and Jean Franco) seek to ground Marxism in precisely such a “number of specific subject positions.” As Franco observes, “Marx offered an epistemological position that allows us to understand the world *as if* we belonged to the proletariat” [514]. Catherine A. MacKinnon, in a biting polemic, nevertheless lays the ground for a feminist “interpellation” when she notes brilliantly that “sexuality is to feminism what work is to marxism” [106]. Chantal Mouffe, one of the many contributors who dismiss “‘class’ position as the origin of the articulation of subjectivity,” opens the door to a larger domain of interpellation when she argues that “interests never exist prior to the discourse in which they are articulated and constituted” [90]. Finally, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in a defense of Derrida unusual in Marxist circles, reminds us in an important cautionary essay that the problems inherent in the philosophical and artistic use of the notion of “representation” equally apply to the political sense of the word, and that when Derrida advises us to “render delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us,” he is “less dangerous when understood than the first-world representor masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter [read: Foucault] who lets the oppressed speak for themselves” [292].

Terry Eagleton, author of another (though non-anthological) attempt to situate the Marxist problematic within the current debate, *Introduction to Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), resurrects a more obvious “first-worlder.” In “The Critic as Clown,” William Empson becomes Eagleton’s unconscious precursor in his attempt to translate the complex into the simple, the pastoral, and eventually into what Eagleton calls “shared humanity.” One of the whipping-boys of post-modern Marxism, Paul de Man (the other being—you guessed it—Michel Foucault), comes to figure the ontological defeatist who fixates on the gulf separating man from a social consciousness. Where lies, then, the appeal to the “practical wisdom” of our fellow humans within the anthology in question? Can we even speak of such a wisdom given the fracturing of discourses either represented or re-enacted (or both) by this collection of essays?

A good place to begin such a search would be to deconstruct what the editors call

the “structure of this book.” Indeed, we should say “structures,” since there are at least eight competing/autonomous/criss-crossing discursive zones (or modes of writing) at work in this book: (1) the scholarly conference paper; (2) the guest lecture; (3) the essay; (4) yes, even the book review: Perry Anderson’s generally favorable appraisal of what I consider to be the most “teachable” of Marxist texts, Marshall Berman’s *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*; (5) the “gloss” or “abstract” (author unknown), about three sentences long, which precedes each essay (6) the question-answer session, with mostly unnamed questioners and a certain amount of editing; (7) contextual reminders, which recall the “actual” order of talks, who was in the room, and what people had just heard (as opposed to the order of the rewritten essays found in the book); (8) the critic’s intellectual biography (in appendix). For those of us who prefer the spontaneity of an oral give-and-take, I would recommend reading only (or at least concurrently) the 51 pages *in toto* devoted to this genre. Here is Stuart Hall, whose essay receives 16 pages of “discussion,” describing what “theory” means to him:

We need to disestablish a highly possessive, individualist notion of what research and intellectual practice is about, which is the dominant notion in the humanities and, indeed, to some extent, in the social sciences. But I don’t want to give an easy picture of the attempts to do collective works at the Centre [for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham]—for example, the project to write collectively. I should tell you its not easy; it’s bloody hard. And unless you are feeling really strong, and unless you are not addicted to those well-wrought sentences of yours (which are bound to be the ones that nobody else likes; those are always the ones they want to rewrite, in their style, etc.), it’s very difficult. I learned a lot about what practice means in this process. [69]

Perhaps it is asking too much to seek in this book such an example of collective writing; but for someone looking for “what practice means” in terms of cultural intervention, this text provides a good example of everything that is wrong with academic conferences, the division of the disciplines, and what has become the “spectacle” of Marxism in America. (Oskar Negt writes that the impact and importance of such divisions is softened and suppressed “by means of an ‘and’: Marxism *and* the natural sciences, Marxism *and* psychology”, etc. [219]. Now, what’s the title of *this* book?) As Catherine A. MacKinnon puts it:

This conference, however broad its inspiration, sophisticated in its conception, competent in its organization, and elaborate in what is called here “articulation,” was not principally set up to maximize conferring. Conferring happens interstitially. Instead, those identified as speakers do what are called “talk;” however, we read them. They are called “works in progress,” however, many of them are quite “done.” The audience responds with what are called “questions,” many of which are in the form of statements. This event presents itself as a dialogue but operates through a linear set of speeches. We are presented as being engaged in a process, when in actuality we gather to produce a product. (105)

These remarks help explain why the reader so often feels akin to a voyeur while

perusing this text, this truly “post-modern space” as Jameson might see it, where every contribution appears distinct, commodified, or “done,” and every discursive interstice is filled by glosses, commentary, etc. If the revitalized “process of interpellation” upon which the future of Marxism rests is to be more than a simulacra of dialogue, we need far better examples of collective intellectual activity—or at least of “working papers”—than this.¹

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Asunción Horno-Delgado, Eliana Ortega, Nina M. Scott, and Nancy Saporta Sternbach, eds. *Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writing and Critical Readings*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989. 268 pp.

Breaking Boundaries is a collection of essays that seeks to define what the editors call Latina writing. The literature they so classify includes Chicana, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, and certain forms of Latin American exile writing by women living in the United States. This literature has, for the most part, an identifiably post-colonial ethnic content. It is made up of texts that tend to get lost at the margins: they are too Latin American to be classified as U.S. literature, and too much a part of North American culture to be considered Latin American. They are often written in a mix of Spanish and English, which is anathema to those who would maintain the racial and linguistic purity of North American English as well as those who reject the imperialist pollution of Spanish by English. For academics, these are the texts that fall neither into mainstream English or Spanish departments, that are most likely taken up in Ethnic Studies or Women's Studies departments.

Breaking Boundaries is edited by the participants of the conference panel out of which it grew. Its introductory essay, co-written by Eliana Ortega and Nancy Saporta Sternbach, claims a socio-historical approach. It is an ambitious essay, which, in seeking to define the field, gives a brief history of Latinas in the United States and raises the issues of canonicity, language, and the unity-in-difference of Latinas and their writing. Ortega and Sternbach take on the difficult questions of the relationship between class and ethnicity, the possibility of an identity politics, and the usefulness of post-modernist theory and methodology. It is not surprising that the essay contains some inconsistencies (is identity inherently unstable, or is it always already present, waiting to be expressed?), but these are the fallout of the vitality and ambition of the piece.

Breaking Boundaries proposes a taxonomy of Latina writing by dividing the book into four sections, each one devoted to a particular Latina group. The sections are unequal in length. Eight articles are dedicated to Chicana writers and six to Puerto Rican writers, but there are only three apiece on Cubans and on Latin Americans from other countries. The progressive decrease in the number of essays dedicated to each

¹The best collection of such papers remains the only slightly out-dated *Culture, Ideology and Social Process: A Reader*, Tony Bennett et. al. eds. (London: Batsford, 1981).

group reflects the unevenness in the amount of critical attention currently being paid to each of the field's subdivisions. White *Breaking Boundaries* thus reflects the tendency in the larger culture to assume that "Latina" is coterminous with "Chicana" or perhaps "Puertorriqueña," the book is organized to demonstrate that "Latina" is not an undifferentiated monolithic term, but rather that there are important distinctions within the category it denotes.

Each section begins with one or two essays by Latina writers representative of the group in question. These essays are called "testimonios," recalling the personal witness of individuals involved in political resistance that has become an increasingly important form of expression in contemporary Latin America. The use of this term suggests not only the immediacy of these essays, but their political as well as literary significance. For this is a politically motivated book, in the best sense of the word. It recognizes an institutionalized exclusion and seeks to address it. The essays included serve as a fine introduction to the work of more than twenty writers in a variety of genres, and the collection as a whole is particularly useful for instructors who want to revise their courses to include Latina writers in a meaningful way. The editors also include a bibliography that is certain to be of use to both scholars and teachers.

The critical essays range from practical readings of individual texts to theoretical discussions in which texts serve as touchstones. Eliana Ortega ("Poetic Discourse of Puerto Rican Women in the U.S.: New Voices of Anacaonian Liberation") digs deep into the mythic and historical past and comes up with the silenced mother of Caliban, replaced and vindicated by the full voiced, powerful Anacaona, "the rebel autochthonous mother . . . the original owner of the land" (125), whom she then invokes as a symbol for the collective voice of the poets she goes on to discuss. Eliana Rivero ("From Immigrants to Ethnic: Cuban Women Writers in the United States") articulates a generational difference that converts nationality into ethnicity and affects the writers' choice of language, form, and content. Mary Jane Treacy ("The Ties that Bind: Women and Community in Evangelina Vigil's *Thirty an' Seen a Lot*") explores the poet's celebration of a feminine and feminized Mexican-American community which is ultimately, "too precarious to allow for any internal critique" of the oppression of women within that community (90). Nina Scott ("Marjorie Agosin as Latina Writer") confronts the "problem" of the writer who refuses to fit into the neat categories of class and race expected of Latinas and Latin Americans.

Among the creative writers, Nicolasa Mohr effectively disrupts any notion of continuity, much less sisterhood, between island and mainland puertorriqueñas, while Chiqui Vicioso chronicles a political education that brought together for her issues of colonialism, class, race, and gender and deposited her back in the Dominican Republic as a threatening stranger strengthened, or contaminated, by feminism.

It is the nature of such a collection to leave the reader wanting more. I missed a study of Gloria Anzaldúa's important book, *Borderlands/La frontera*, and a critical piece by Luz Mariá Umpierre, whose poetry is the subject of an essay by Asunción Horno-Delgado, but who is also one of the most creative and insightful critics of Latina literature writing today. As the editors point out, however, this book cannot begin to cover all the territory it sketches out. That territory is, to use Gloria Anzaldúa's metaphor, a richly populated borderland that emerges as the boundaries of the title are broken. The rupture of those one-dimensional, divisive lengths reveals a previously

unseen space, a wide and complex crossing place where cultures mix as they trace multiple paths to each other. The editors succeed in making this borderland visible, and with their contributors take on the arduous task of mapping its territory.

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Jonathan Culler. *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions*. Norman & London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. 236 pp.

An early contribution to the Oklahoma Project for Discourse and Theory, a series that promises to both enlighten and enliven the debates in which critics engage in years to come, Jonathan Culler's *Framing the Sign* is must reading for those wishing to grasp the complexities generated by the proliferation of theoretical discourses that challenge the foundations and traditions not only of literary studies but of numerous disciplines in which the methods proffered by contemporary literary theory are now practiced. In this collection of lucid and provocative essays reflecting upon such diverse topics as academic politics, the cultural hegemony of religious dogma, historical activism, rubbish, tourism, legal studies and normative social theory, Culler argues that the interpretive strategies and analytical approaches often associated with the term "theory" have become a formidable force that has heightened political tensions and dramatically altered the cultural and intellectual dynamics at play within the institution of American literary criticism and its broader university setting.

Ostensibly, Culler's chief aim is that of explicating the relationship between signs and their structural limits. It is the notion of framing rather than of context, he asserts, that best allows one to appreciate the manner in which signs are "constituted . . . by various discursive practices, institutional arrangements, systems of value, semiotic mechanisms" (xiv). Acknowledging the significance of boundaries is, he reasons, as crucial to understanding the current state of scholarly affairs in the humanities as it is to comprehending the means by which our culture identifies trash. In his own choice of objects, Culler repeatedly brings into relief the constructed nature of the limits in relation to which intelligibility is produced, highlights the sign's dependence upon a complex interplay of structural forces and strives to denaturalize the values and verities encoded in an array of signifying systems. Whether discussing the production of knowledge in American universities or examining the diverse contributions made to contemporary theory by such prominent figures as William Empson, Gaston Bachelard and Paul de Man, Culler's constant concern is that of reminding all readers of texts—literary and otherwise—that the truths we impart to them are largely "fictions whose fictionality" must not be forgotten. Rather than pursuing a definitive stabilization of truth and meaning, he claims, the task of the critic is to constantly "reinvent reading" such that "previously unseen inscriptions may be read" (xv). It is within this conceptual framework that Culler considers a range of issues related to the economy of the sign that implicate various aspects of literary criticism and, most importantly, the institutional confines in which it is practiced and professed.

By far the most compelling essays in this collection are those clustered under the heading "Institutions." In this segment, Culler broadly sketches the history of literary criticism in the United States from the 1920s to the present, marking the progressive

decline of a public, non-academic criticism, the advent of New Criticism and the more recent multiplication and diversification of theoretical perspectives in the form of psychoanalytic, linguistic, structuralist, Marxist and deconstructionist approaches to literature. He specifically calls attention to two recent developments in literary studies that have accompanied the emergence of these discourses. He notes first that literary theory has begun over the last decade to export its methods to other fields of inquiry, a move that has greatly promoted the expansion of interdisciplinary research and thus the scope of 'legitimate' objects of scholarly concern. The second trend, one whose intellectual limits, he suggests, have yet to be fully explored, is the politicization of textual analysis. In its wake, critics have increasingly turned their professional attentions to exposing and overtly contesting the sexist, racist and authoritarian ideologies that are, advocates of the political would argue, conveyed in literature, reinforced in university curricula and pedagogy and reproduced in conventional criticism.

In an incisive look at "The Humanities Tomorrow," Culler evaluates the impact of these intellectual shifts and examines the ideology shaping the backlash against "the chaos of theory" that has gathered conservative strength in recent years. Pointing to the vogue of "crisis narratives" bemoaning the decline of academic standards and the scattering of a core liberal arts curriculum, Culler illustrates that strident calls for a return to the masterful "great works" of Western literature and philosophy often derive from a resistance to theory and mask the anxieties aroused by the indeterminacy of truth, the plurality of meanings and what proponents of tradition perceive as the anarchy of thought promoted in contemporary theoretical discourses. Culler's analysis makes it abundantly clear, however, that those who extol the virtues of returning to the founding principle of greatness in establishing curricular priorities are entirely oblivious to the universalist assumptions and cultural bias governing the selection of texts they deem exemplary of the best that the Western cultural heritage has to offer its generations of youth. Protecting tradition, he observes, is more often than not a euphemism for the desire to squelch voices of gender, racial and ethnic difference in humanities studies. The absurdity of such proposals becomes fully apparent when one thinks, as this critic does, of "the future of our multi-lingual, multi-racial society" where, in light of current demographic projections, it will be "hard seriously to imagine the establishment of a common culture based on the Greeks and other classics" (49).

While Culler enthusiastically endorses efforts to diversify and include within humanities curricula a wide variety of cultural texts, he cautions those who ideologically challenge sexist, racist and ethnocentric constructions of canonical reason against both the "totalizing impulse" and the emancipatory appeal of a consciously politicized involvement with the text. Critics schooled in methods of reading that allow one to deconstruct the founding principles of value systems and ideologies one opposes must ceaselessly remind themselves that signifying processes are ruled by structures that escape the will and intentionality of the subject. As such, only those critical interventions that allow for the free play of the signifier offer possibilities to invent the new readings that alone hold true revolutionary potential. It is from this perspective that Culler critiques the "call to history" issued explicitly in Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) and which politically inspired critics have found in the work of Michel Foucault. Culler notes that although Foucault was a "brilliant inventor of historical objects," his

writings elaborate no explicit method for reading literary texts. He is indeed puzzled by the fact that politically-minded critics turn to Foucault's micro-histories in an effort to extend meanings beyond textual space and into the broader sphere of socio-political relations where, it is hoped, some form of liberation might occur. Culler's critique demonstrates, however, that such critical endeavors are indeed misguided since they disregard what many believe to be Foucault's most original contribution: the understanding that one in fact never stands beyond the reach of power.

This word of caution regarding the caveats of political criticism does not prevent Culler from launching a militant attack against what remains one of the most unassailable signifying systems in American culture: the "superstition" of religion. Following the path of English critic William Empson, who years ago saw the need to counter the Christianizing impulses of the literary establishment and to expose the fictional character of religious beliefs, Culler energetically disputes the authoritarian and patriarchal logic of the religious discourses that in the United States have once again become such an influential force in the political sphere. Making the astute observation that no public anti-religious discourse is tolerated in our society, he goes on to argue that professors of literature bear some of the responsibility for the culture's appalling lack of skepticism with respect to religion for they have been far too sheepish about directly confronting the heady certainties of spiritual doctrine. Combatting the sacrosanct taboos and pieties of our religious belief systems is far more politically fruitful, he claims, than engaging in cerebral intellectual debates concerning the progressive or conservative implications of the various theories advanced by thinkers of a post-structuralist mode.

While I have dealt at considerable length upon *Framing the Sign's* treatment of the disruptive effects theory has had upon the institution of American literary criticism, there are numerous essays included in subsequent chapters ("Critics Reading," "Cultural Criticism" and "Framing Language") which either discuss the intellectual figures who contributed to the development of these critical practices or which perform the types of detotalized readings of cultural formations (i. e. of the law, tourism and rubbish) advocated earlier. Along with calling attention to the remarkable originality of William Empson and Gaston Bachelard, Culler provides a thorough summary of Paul de Man's writings, highlighting the manner in which they expose and steadfastly resist all totalizing rhetorical manoeuvres. His hope is that this exposé of de Man's thought will nuance the meaning ultimately attributed to the recently discovered "wartime juvenilia" (i. e. ostensibly pro-fascist newspaper articles de Man published under the German occupation of Belgium) for, he suggests, these texts must be placed in dialogue with later reflections on literature which "offer some of the most powerful tools for combatting the ideology with which he had earlier been complicitous" (109).

The segment devoted to "The Semiotics of Tourism" and "Rubbish Theory" are humorous and instructive examples of the insights into cultural practices that can be derived from rummaging through the seemingly insignificant (and therefore largely inconspicuous) markers that constitute the codes by which we determine value and in relation to which we misread and judge, often with great arrogance, the worth of cultural behaviors that are not our own. The final group of essays focuses on speech act theory and normative conceptions of language, pose theoretical problems concerning the boundaries between the fictional and non-fictional text and finally discusses

Saussurian anagrams and the implications they might have for a linguistics of writing. Although the style and substance of these last pieces are slightly more ponderous and lack much of the polemical zest that make many of the others so compelling, they reaffirm the primacy of language and remind us that neither in communication nor interpretation do we escape its semantic whims.

The wide range of theoretical issues Culler frames in this impressive collection opens numerous windows onto a complex and relativized world of intellectual thought in which boundaries are in a constant state of flux and the signifying terrain forever shifting beneath us. Partisan readers of the left and right may balk at many of the opinions Culler advances here, considering them either too politically tepid or scandalously irreverent, depending upon the space from which they are read. *Framing the Sign* is, however, a most valuable contribution to our understanding of the structural transformations that the institution of literary criticism has undergone over the past sixty years and of the innovation that has made in an increasingly powerful force in American intellectual life. It also perceptively pinpoints the source of social, cultural, political tensions that now find their expression in the academy, tensions that are likely to become more volatile as we move toward the twenty-first century and a period of dramatic change in the racial and ethnic composition of our society. Culler intimates that an increased polarization of views is likely to result from the institutional realities produced by these changes and it thus appears inevitable that there will be considerable struggle within the academic community over the ideological and intellectual shape our institutions of higher learning are to take in coming years. Culler is not dismayed by the prospect of such conflict for one would in such circumstances "at least have the continuing argument that encourages reflection and prevents the reification of the humanities into given truths or lifeless texts."

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The University of Iowa

Wolfgang Iser. *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989. ix + 316 pp.

Wolfgang Iser has come up with a stimulating and intriguing proposal for the development of an anthropology of literature. Continuing the exploration of reader discovery and aesthetic response initiated in *The Act of Reading*, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* outlines the "inaccessible" terrains of fictionality that tell us more about the nature of man and understanding. Iser's latest publication investigates the mimesis-producing effect of literature as it comes to life within the reader's imagination and questions: What is it that makes the reader want to share in the adventure of literature? Why is it that novices and professionals are lured into the game of interpretation? What does representation tell us about ourselves? Why do we need to find meanings in the text? in interpretation?

In the interplay between the fictional and the imaginary, Iser notes rearrangements of reality indicating inaccessible elements of culture that make it relevant. He suggests that this break into a void of unknowable aspects offers clues to the anthropological makeup of human kind, as "Literature draws its life from interaction between imaginary, conscious, and perceptual activities, and appears to have no clear basis or

origin in any of these 'faculties'." (280) Refusing the postmodern tendency to historicize in terms of selected systems, he probes the interrelation between fiction and reality to consider "whether literature—in relation to history or society—reflects something special that neither philosophies of history nor sociological theories are able to capture" (263).

Prospecting looks at the literary flow of fantasy as an "instrument of exploration." It digs into the value of hidden processes at play that reveal and conceal a human element, and perhaps even a need, moving beyond restraints of superficial attributes. Working outside conditioned wisdom and conventional culture, this study charts new rights of passage for researching literature's attempt to "grasp the ungraspable and conceive the inconceivable." Critics have often analyzed literature's attempt to be, create, or design reality; Iser, however, attempts to devise a framework for assessing literature as a medium incorporating a vast range of reactions to reality, insisting: "The text itself must contain the preconditions that enable the different approaches to be effective." (221) This work traces a systematic increase of "indeterminacy" in literature from the eighteenth century through the works of Dickens, Fielding, Joyce, Thackeray, and Beckett. Iser identifies gaps and spaces in the text that point to patterns and correspondences which have been previously unavailable. "Dramatic bondings" resulting from diverse reactions to the indeterminate, allocated space for the reader confirm his view:

"Literature simulates life, not in order to portray it, but in order to allow the reader to share in it. . . . Thus, with every text we learn not only about what we are reading but also about ourselves, and this process is all the more effective if what we are supposed to experience is not explicitly stated but has to be inferred." (29)

Through the development and demise of literary theory, *Prospecting* maps out overworked territories polarized around overworked suppositions that determine the text. Chapters devoted to Spenser's *Arcadia*, Shakespeare's *As You Like it*, and *Ulysses* demonstrate how movements of criticism (Russian formalism, Marxist socialism, structuralism, phenomenology, deconstruction), have focused on assumptions that select some elements while ignoring others to force an artificial fit with a particular, theoretical model. Iser makes this point as he sets up a debate on the function and process of literary criticism. Chapter Three incorporates written interviews conducted between Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, and Wayne Booth, that offer an amusing insight into the manner in which literary lords interact and squabble among themselves. Sparks flying over the correct interpretation of the text make an understated, subtle commentary reflecting inherent limitations in territorial rights of interpretation. Wayne Booth insists his own theory of the implied reader has been taken too far as he reproves Iser for giving too little respect for the text's authority: "you seem to see the implied reader as only the credulous reader in the text, while resisting, criticizing, modifying, remembering of the real world is all done somehow by the 'real reader' as not implied in the text. Do I misread you?" (59) The "Do I misread you?" makes Iser's point precisely and would have been an appropriate title for this book.

As breaking up the pigeonholes of disciplines becomes part of the academic quarrel, Iser turns toward a literary playground hidden among indeterminate,

anthropological dispositions. He investigates art as the pleasure of extending ourselves to remind us that we may have forgotten what we once knew: "Man is an interpreting animal and in this respect literature is an integral feature of our makeup. It may be nothing but a game, yet as a game it allows us to simulate an inexhaustible variety of trial runs, far in excess of what life may demand of us" (210).

Prospecting takes a pioneering position at the dawn of a decade opening up to expanding ideas moving through "indeterminate gaps" and "boundary crossings" of cultural studies. Iser's imaginative play of prose presented in a pleasant and quotable style triggers new debates about why we read literature. Readers willing to risk moving away from secure territories of tried and true literary analysis will enjoy prospecting through the mysteries of interpretation, experience, and imagination in this careful, thoughtful research on the free-play response to changing images of fantasy and fiction.

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Colin Davis. *Michel Tournier: Philosophy and Fiction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. 222 pp.

Michel Tournier has been (and remains) a tremendously successful novelist—successful commercially and critically—his first and second novels winning Le Grand Prix de l'Académie Française and the Prix Goncourt respectively. Success has not come without controversy however, for as David Bevan remarked in an earlier book-length study of Tournier's work (*Michel Tournier*. Amsterdam: Collection Monographique Rodopi, 1986) "on peut admettre un malaise raisonnable face à un esprit créateur qui juxtapose, impénitent, le métaphysique et le scatologique, glissant avec une facilité (dis)gracieuse entre Bible et bordel, entre mythique et merdique, soudant dans son exploration du sacré et du transcendantal les pires perversions . . . à une vénération sincère de la vie humaine" (7). Bevan was struck by the polarization of the critical reaction to Tournier's work and the ferocity of the debate surrounding it.

Only two years later Colin Davis' study of Michel Tournier's fiction, *Michel Tournier: Philosophy and Fiction*, sounds a quieter note. It is a valuable study: careful, lucid and thorough, thickly textured with quotes from Tournier's works. Davis is not primarily interested in philosophical influences or sources, despite the fact that Tournier's novels provide "a daunting range of references" to philosophical works including Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and Sartre (Davis, 6). Instead, Davis examines the results of an existential choice: Tournier's "turn to literature" after his failure to pass the *agrégation* in philosophy and his decision to write novels as another way to "faire de la philosophie."

However, as Davis indicates, Tournier "never commits himself unambiguously to any particular philosophical theory" and to a certain extent his novels transform philosophy into an aesthetic phenomenon (6). Nonetheless Davis places philosophy at the heart of Tournier's existential project, claiming in the final chapter that Tournier's "dilemma" as a writer is the inability to choose between Hegel and Nietzsche (206). Although Davis clearly intends this choice as a symbolic illustration of the "conflicting imperatives" (102) at work in Tournier's fiction, it is the central (if unstated) thesis of his book. For if Tournier derives reassurance and aesthetic pleasure from the

coherence and intelligibility conferred on human experience by all encompassing systems of thought, his desire for order and meaning are contradicted by the sense of freedom and power he appears to find in transforming or subverting the very categories of meaning they establish. Hence his contamination of philosophy with literature (he considers the latter an inferior genre) and his delight in paradox and “inversion”: the change of sign he effects by transforming a category, moral, aesthetic or other, into its opposite. Tiffauge’s epiphany in *Le Roi des aulnes* when he recognizes “la droite devient gauche, la gauche devient droite, le bien est appelé mal et le mal bien” (quoted in Davis, 52) represents just such a change of sign. The danger, of course, is that such paradoxes and inversions threaten the aesthetic unity and coherence of Tournier’s novels, in some cases raising troubling ethical questions. As Joseph Gareau puts it: “Si l’imagination de l’auteur garde tous ses droits, il reste qu’au niveau de la morale de telles pirouettes ne vont pas sans ambiguïté.” (*French Review* 67, 684). Yet it is precisely the energy generated by Tournier’s dualism that creates the forcefield of his writing, and writing itself, Davis maintains, becomes the solution to his dilemma.

Davis’ study does not take the form of a description of an existential project however, and, regrettably, to my mind, his characterization of Tournier as a writer unable to choose between Hegel and Nietzsche illuminates the study only retrospectively. The bulk of the chapters find Davis engaged in uncovering the dichotomies of Tournier’s poetics and aesthetics by studying the major themes that traverse his fiction. Davis devotes a chapter to each of Tournier’s first three novels: *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, *Le Roi des aulnes* and *Météores*. The next three chapters explore major philosophical issues in Tournier’s novels: “Meaning and Intention,” “Art and Truth,” “Silence, Language and ‘Bavardage’ ” through readings of Tournier’s later work: *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar*, *Gilles et Jeanne*, *Le Fétichiste* and *La Goutte d’or*, which he relates to the earlier novels. This leads to some repetition, but the individual analyses will be valuable to readers who skip and skim. Davis does not maintain, as does Alain Buisine (*Sub-stance* 58, 28), that Tournier’s more recent fiction is an impoverished reworking of earlier themes, yet on the whole his more summary treatment of the later work suggests a similar view.

Davis’ Tournier does not differ sharply from that of earlier critics; his study complements and deepens earlier work such as Bevan’s. However, unlike Bevan, perhaps precisely because he considers earlier critics have already dealt with the issue, Davis acknowledges but downplays the more provocative and troubling elements of Tournier’s fiction. Davis dismisses suspicions that Tournier has Fascist sympathies or that he “‘aestheticizes’ Nazism” (204) in *Le Roi des aulnes*, yet he concedes that it is a “more vicious novel than the reader might have expected” (60). (He does not mention Saul Friedländer’s contention that the novel is a major manifestation of a new kind of discourse on Nazism—see *Reflets du Nazisme*. Editions du Seuil, 1982.) Davis does cite “the dangerous and frightening insights” of *Les Météores*, Tournier’s attempt to mislead the reader in *Gilles et Jeanne* (131) and hostility toward the reader disguised as “paternal benevolence” in *Le Vol du vampire*.

Perhaps the crucial issue in assessing the more troubling aspects of Tournier’s fiction is Tournier’s sense of authorial intention, or to put the issue another way, the referential versus the reflexive status of his fiction. Davis takes up this issue as it emerges in specific works, but addresses it directly in “Meaning and Intention,” where he discusses “Tournier’s struggle for control over his own texts” (116). Davis

is not entirely convincing when he maintains that Tournier's decision to write conventional novels with "tous les ingrédients obligés du roman traditionnel" (characters, plot, psychology and so forth) is merely a polemical pose concealing a far greater interest in experimental fiction and *polysémie*—and consequently a far greater affinity with the Nouveau Roman—than Tournier would care to admit. Certainly in *Le Vent paralet* Tournier describes the author as an "aberration causaliste" and the work as self-engendered, continually recreated by individual readers; however, it is equally clear (as Davis indicates) that Tournier is unwilling to relinquish the rights and privileges of authorship. Not only does he coyly suggest that he is a writer-creator of genius, but more importantly he asserts the importance of authorial intention as a determinant of meaning. This is particularly troubling in works such as *Le Roi des aulnes* and *Gilles et Jeanne*, where Tournier's narrative draws most heavily on actual historical events. The historical facts float in the narrative where they function as signs of reference without entirely losing the weight of their referentiality. Their actual historical context has nonetheless dissolved into an order of signs governed by authorial intention.

Curiously, such a narrative structure based on a fusion of referential and self-reflexive elements appears to resemble the very condition which the Commander in *Le Roi des aulnes* warns Tiffauges against: "the dissolution of reference within the self engendering order of signs." The Commander counterattacks by attempting "to re-establish the primacy of intentional meaning" (54). Yet as Davis points out, Tournier's intentions remain unclear and his novels frequently give rise to contradictory interpretations. Deliberately so in the case of *Gilles et Jeanne*, Davis maintains, where Tournier "uses] the semantic indeterminacy of the text as an instrument of his hostility toward the reader" (124). It is precisely because Davis takes the referential elements of Tournier's novels seriously that he taxes Tournier with misleading his reader or raises questions about "ethical limits and the limits of ethics" (134).

Ultimately, Davis attempts to rationalize the contradictory impulses of Tournier's fiction by referring the reader to Tournier's "unease": his ambiguous attitude toward his own historical situation—a modernity which Tournier characterizes as "triple dégénérescence: la sagesse morte s'est décomposée en science physico-mathématique, morale formelle et information utilitaire" (204). Yet if Tournier's nostalgia for a lost ideal of *sagesse*, his uneasiness, his indecision and his inability to choose between creative freedom and aesthetic order, Nietzsche and Hegel, are "what makes [his] work so relevant to the predicament of the contemporary reader" (206), what are we as readers to make of his hostility toward us?

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Didier Coste. *Narrative as Communication*. Foreword by Wlad Godzich. Theory and History of Literature, Volume 64. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. xx + 370 pp.

Narrative is not necessarily a baggy monster but it certainly is a hairy one: to expose all its parts is to risk being devoured. Didier Coste courageously takes that risk in this most comprehensive narratology to date, and he emerges victorious.

What makes Coste's project unique is the insistence on narrative's being *the result*

of a communication, not an object set in words for which a narratology supplies rules. The model of social communication, the production and exchange of narrative meaning and aesthetic value, always in time, governs this narratology, which studies the process by which messages are formed and their function. But this model, a revision of Jakobson's, is unfamiliar. Coste turns "message" into "text" and, in an important and necessary improvement, adds a third party to the instance of communication, the reader/observer of the message. But the message is not conveyed; it is "the meaningfulness that is turned by the participants and witnesses of the act of communication into evidence that this act has taken place" (5). Thus the emphasis is on the act itself, for Coste does not consider narrative a content. And narratology is "the construction of models that should permit the open textualization of the operations that take place between all [forms of texts]" (6), which allows Coste to avoid describing the *results* of narrative communication and to dwell on its *operations*. Narrative units are in a process of construction and combination by the reader; they are an "invitation to construct narrative" (66). Coste scorns the reduction of "narrative" to "fiction," and "literariness" to "literature," and he includes historiography, poetry, philosophy, psychoanalysis, film, and many other forms of narrative—even a Pollock painting (278), which may be more communication as narrative than narrative as communication. Narrative transformations "all add up toward the narrative significance produced as that of the text by the act of communication based on this text" (215). This is the kind of phrasing Coste uses to avoid objectifying narrative by saying "the meaning of the text."

Much space is devoted to tearing down the walls preventing a communicative theory of narrative. The reader must assent to the insistence on communication. Putting before us the entire vast landscape of narrative, Coste gives a new account, which always begins by making it strange and by critically reading the familiar views. A striking example is his criticism of the "incredible confusion" on point of view (177). Consider also this definition of narrator:

Any meaningful utterance U presupposes an act of enunciation reconstructed by a receiver in the form: "X says U." We call X an *enunciator*. The enunciator is a narrator if U has a narrative effect or is part of a set of utterances, explicit or implicit, from which narrative meaning can be derived. . . . A *narrator is the subject of enunciation of one or more utterances that either contain a narrateme or are involved in the production of a narrateme by the reader.* (166)

Treating a constellation of terms including plot, action, story, sequence, scene, summary, etc. (there is a long and familiar list), Coste regrets, as it were, having to take up this terminology, but he does say: "each of the concepts will be treated as denoting an operation in a praxis, a move in a quest for significance, not textual objects" (213). The insistence is on the operation, the creating of meaning by the reader. It is in this sense that his is a study of narrative communication, not of narrative. Coste is resolutely oriented toward reception. Thus voice is "the product of the reader's quest for the origin of the text" (164), and "For any utterance in a text or for a text as a whole, the subject of enunciation is always a construction of the receiver, *not* the grammatical subject of the utterance, set of utterances, or complete text concerned" (167).

Coste's discourse is always original, never familiar, often audacious; one sometimes wonders where he is going, as he requires us to seek out his logic. It would be difficult to read selected chapters, because the book builds its terminology and concepts in a logical manner starting from the most elemental units. One cannot skip a section because another narratologist has treated the topic. Coste's is always a critical reading, a fresh elaboration; he appropriates what he wants, rejects quite a lot, and neglects most.

One is struck by an apparent contradiction between two styles, two tones: precise, scientific, dogmatically logical, carefully defining; lyrical, poetic, reflective, portentous:

Narrative keeps the idea of death constantly in front of us. With narrative, day after day, we get used to death; it is the greatest school of resignation and, indeed, of fatalism, as it is the greatest school of optimism—since bad things can change too, at least for a time. Narrative takes place in the two nights of Friday and Saturday, at the borders of repose and action. (11)

But the scientific quickly comes to dominate. The book is technical, very sophisticated, and tightly reasoned and argued at all moments. The sciences called upon include logic, linguistics (structural and transformational), semiotics, rhetoric, and semantics. For nearly every item of description or analysis there is a schematic diagram. One sometimes feels the need to nudge the rigid terminology back toward ordinary discourse: "Narrative syntax has two main facets. 1: the articulation of narrative and non-narrative discourses within the decoded/recoded narrative text" (207)—i. e., the linkage between narrative parts and descriptive or other parts—"and 2: the ordering of narratemes recognized, comprehended, and apprehended at different moments of the dual process of implication/explication"—quite a mouthful on the ordering of narrative segments.

Entrance to Coste's thought thus depends on walls of words that guide the reader in a particular and unique direction, leaving no other openings through which disagreement might take hold. His prose is *defensive*. And I mean this in the psychoanalytical sense well illustrated by Lacan's metaphors "chicane" and "redan" (the *chicane* is a zigzag entrance to a fortification allowing passage of friendly troops).

In sum, what makes the book difficult is the defamiliarization of the ground covered—readers will recognize little from previous narratologies, and things familiar to naive readers and naive readings (such as the opposition between narrative and description) do not hold: the idiosyncrasy of its procedures—the logic of its discovery, to which we must constantly be attentive; the obsessive scientificity of its language—the lists (bulleted or numbered), charts, graphs, diagrams, symbols, and models; and a kind of negativity—what narratology is *not* requires considerable argumentation. Though I reproach Coste for this difficulty, it is in fact my only reproach, and one that other readers might not share. The book would however be impenetrable to undergraduate students; they would never make it through chapter 1.

In all Coste has written not just a book but a narratology. It is safe to say that no one has treated the matter so exhaustively; only an exhaustive reading will do justice to its depth and breadth, an enormous investment by the receiver of this comprehensive

theory. To give a summary of its contents would be to betray the design of the book and the intent of the narratology, just as the table of contents does not announce familiar topics (for instance, "Polyreference and *Comparatio*" is the title of a section on fiction's relation to reality, to imaginary and real reference). Coste's narratology is chiefly a set of positions, somewhat less a system of rules and certainly not a method. One could not "apply" it in toto as people have done to Genette and others (though some parts, such as the lucid chapter on referentiality, encourage application). Readers will have to give themselves wholeheartedly to this narratology, forsaking all others.

Wlad Godzich's foreword is dense but a thoughtful and helpful introduction to what follows.

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Jean-Jacques Thomas. *La Langue, la poésie. Essais sur la poésie française contemporaine*. Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, coll. Problématiques, 1989. 192 pp.

While there has been no dearth of poets or poetry in French over the last forty years it is only in the last decade that there have been signs of a renewed readership. The decentered character of the poetic world has undoubtedly helped keep it less visible; since the war no poetic movement or school has mustered anything like the excitement and adherence comparable to Surrealism; no individual has assumed the stature formerly enjoyed by Breton, Valéry, Mallarmé, or Hugo. If there is any unity in postwar poetry it is perhaps to be sought in the widespread abandon of traditional poetic form (meter, rhyme, fixed forms) which has freed up attention to more general prosodic strategies. Much of the poetry can initially be read as solitary dramas enacted between the author and the resources of language. Revitalized by the resurgence of rhetoric, contemporary poetics is reasonably well-positioned to address aspects of this text carved from language.

Thomas reads from this rhetorical moment: quick to announce a dehistoricized history and a dereferentialized geography (15–16), he goes on to amass quite an arsenal of semiotics under his methodological roof, steering clear of any shallow aestheticism. Notions of intertextuality and a frequent comparative format stave off any formalist dangers of *explication de texte*. The faintly anarchistic exuberance for experimental poetry and poetics is accompanied by an aversion to cultural clichés, but not by anger and anguish. On principle the author has kept two components out of his approach which others may feel necessary for contemporary criticism: a theory of the subject and an ability to address real socio-historical questions. Both would be integrated to the book's opening onto pragmatics (56–57). Recent work by Coquet, Fontanille, Greimas, and Zilberberg moves toward a semiotic construction of the subject; a new construction of history and the *socius* would be useful. Thomas's critique of a pseudo-universal linguistic structure and proposal for a "semorial competence" (60; cf. Michel Charles) go in the right direction. It is difficult to imagine a better companion to the otherwise classical nostalgia for a moral purpose in literature; the essay on Dada affirms that its raucous revolt takes place under the sign of *opus impendere vero* (132).

J.-J. Thomas's study brings together articles which have appeared in such journals as *Poétique*, *Romanic Review*, *Stanford French Review*, *French Forum*, *Sub-stance*,

and *L'Esprit Créateur* over the last dozen years. The predominance of *avant-garde* esthetics in the poetry and structuralist stylistics in the approach provide coherence for the work. *La Langue, la poésie* does not debate a thesis but explores different avenues leading from the central conviction that an immanent analysis of texts takes precedence over extrinsic considerations. Snatches of verse from Dada, Surrealism, and the contemporary voices of *Change* and Oulipo provide material for discussions informed by structural semantics, semiotics, pragmatics, and other recent currents in the language arts, especially those from the fertile period of the sixties and seventies. Aimed at the non-specialist, the exposition is intelligent, lively, and lucid throughout; Thomas indeed communicates a joy for the poetic which has perhaps become a bit rare in the learned academic shuffle. Two chapters (109–61) should be read by any student or scholar pursuing an exploration of contemporary poetry and poetics. Thomas has not designed his study for either the neophyte tourist or the seasoned fellow-traveler, however. For the most part, the book does not attempt to provide an introduction either to the critical approaches used or to the poets and poetic *oeuvres* invoked, nor does it abound in extensive analyses of French verse or sustained examinations of theoretical-critical issues. The study is above all a suggestive initiation into ways of reading recent French poetry.

La Langue, la poésie demonstrates a double internal progression, moving from the extrinsic to the intrinsic (in its methodological approach) and from the aleatory to the highly systematic (in the poetry studied). Part One "*Le Leurre référentiel*" reappropriates potentially external factors for the internal functioning of the text. A first chapter contrasts Yvan Goll's topological poetics to the (preferred) tropological travels of Michel Leiris (cf. the latter's *L'Afrique fantôme*). A short 'the man and the work' section introduces the lesser known early-century Goll (19–20), a self-proclaimed surrealist and rival to Breton who shares with Leiris the Apollinaire influence. In a second chapter the generalizing, schematizing, and universalizing verses of Eluard's 1937 "Victoire de Guernica" are contrasted with the more journalistic 1950 film commentary "Guernica" by the same author. The prose expositions written for the film sketch a historical, geographical, and cultural backdrop for the 1937 bombing and poetic reflections on the event. The analyses of this first section are suggestive and would be further explored. What would the contrast between the topological and the tropological voyage produce in a close study of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*? How would Thomas work with the theoretics of the referential illusion in the wake of Lyotard's *The Differend* and the Paul de Man affair?

Part Two "*L'Intertextuel*" spurns an infinite Barthesian-Derridean plurality or dissemination judged too indulgent of the reader's whim. A more constraining notion of intertextuality is adopted which posits constants in the (appropriate) comprehension of a text; the reader's interpretation is linked to the processes that generate the text (cf. Riffaterre's "obligatory intertextuality"). A first elegant illustration draws on the rhythms of popular songs, the fables of La Fontaine, and the lexicon of counting rhymes to explicate a verse from Max Jacob's long poem "Le Coq et l'âne" (from *Le Cornet à dés*). After a chapter on Apollinaire's Arthurian *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, short quotations from Yves Bonnefoy and Henri Meschonnic are used to contrast two types of metaphor. Bonnefoy's "image" metaphor depends on an intertextual reference, while in Meschonnic's "formula" variety internal semantic traits perform the same task (97–101). The promise of this middle section again prompts interested queries: to what extent does the semic analysis of the verse from Jacob set up that of the whole

poem? What array or economy of prosodic structures can one devise to characterize the intertextual matrices of Yves Bonnefoy's poetry? The recurrent use of the term "modernism" (e.g. 90) to characterize the poetic strategies scrutinized invites a confrontation with those attributed to post-modernism.

Part Three "*Le Techno-ludique*" explores a sample of some of the more radical and explicit poetic language games in the Twentieth Century. The chapter "*Dada ne signifie rien*" (109–33) develops the notion of "proto-semiotics" to read Dadaist poetic texts. Proto-semiotics describes the discourse reduced to its elementary constituents. The Dada phonetic texts (cf. Lettrism) and graphological adventures free the signifier from dependence on the signified. Together with texts that question the arbitrary character of the sign (e.g. Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*) and the constitution of the sign itself (Aragon's famous "Suicide") they short-circuit the utilitarian tactics of conventional language. The chapter proposes readings for over a dozen short Dada poems which it reproduces in full. It is a handy source for anyone reading on the topic or teaching it. The second chapter of the section, "*Lecture / Montage / Espace*," continues the same style of analysis working with more recent poetry. Two concrete poems serve as onomatopoeias of shapes in the cultural world, while the macro-poetics of Jacques Roubaud's collections demonstrate the productivity of numerical schemata. Roubaud's texts share in the radical experimentation reminiscent of the Dada and Surrealist moments, while their highly regulated internal logic and geometry contrasts with the esthetic of chance and the unexpected encounter so important to the *entre-les-deux-guerres* movements. A poem by Jean-Pierre Faye occasions the introduction of "*réfraction*" to study the deflection, bending, and breaking of traditional poetic frameworks in contemporary poetry. The book concludes with a chapter on Oulipo and its prefaces miming instructional brochures ("*modes d'emploi*"). Thomas critiques Bénamou's *Tollé (Tableau des Opérations Linguistiques et Littéraires Élémentaires)* in the name of greater linguistic accuracy. Similarly, his solution to the problem that miserably punning tongues have labeled *Tristesse d'Oulipo* ("Oulipian sadness") is more complex prosodic games and more rigorously applied rules. The articles in this third section seem to me to be the most useful of the book.

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Manfred Dierks, ed. *Adolf Muschg* (Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Materialien st 2086). Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989. 425 pp.

Although Adolf Muschg is perhaps the most widely read and well-respected writer in Switzerland since Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, his major works have received relatively little serious critical attention. In spite of his stature, only two monographs have thus far been devoted exclusively to this author. The first, *Über Adolf Muschg* (1979), edited by Judith Ricker, covered his life and works up to 1978, the second, Renate Voris' "Autorenbuch" *Adolf Muschg* (1984), up to 1982.

The book under consideration is a re-evaluation of Muschg's work in light of his prolific output since 1978. It starts where *Über Adolf Muschg* left off, tracing Muschg's development from 1979 until 1988 and retaining roughly the same format as *Über Adolf Muschg*. It contains a brief introduction by the editor, five original contributions of varying length dealing with Muschg's oeuvre ("*Aspekte des Gesamtwerks*"),

twenty-six previously published reviews of Muschg's major works from this period ("Lesarten. Zu einzelnen Werken"), several previously published essays by Muschg ("Selbstbestimmungen"), excerpts from an interview with the editor ("Die Oberfläche als Ort der Kunst"), and an appendix with a brief vita, sixteen photographs, and extensive bibliographies of primary and secondary literature. The six works reviewed are the story *Noch ein Wunsch* (1979), the novels *Baiyun oder die Freundschaftsgesellschaft* (1980) and *Das Licht und der Schlüssel. Erziehungsroman eines Vampirs* (1984), the Frankfurt lectures *Literatur als Therapie?* (1981), and the two volumes of short stories *Leib und Leben* (1982) and *Der Turmhahn und andere Liebesgeschichten* (1987).

In his prefatory remarks, Dierks suggests that Muschg has entered a new phase marked by a shift away from traditional Freudian psychoanalysis and narcissism to psychoanalytical theories more akin to those of Jacques Lacan, a shift from the myth of Oedipus to that of Ulysses, from traditional psychoanalysis to bio-energetic group therapy. Muschg's essay "Psychoanalyse und Manipulation—warum ich mit diesem Thema nicht fertig wurde" (293–318), probably the most important essay by Muschg in this volume, is the foundation upon which Dierks' theories are based. Both Renate Böschstein and he explore these changes in their longer contributions, the most substantive and compelling analyses in the book.

Böschstein's article "Schreiben nach und mit Freud," which explores the relationship of text and subtext in some of Muschg's novels, chronicles Muschg's lifelong preoccupation with Freud from the winter semester of 1953–54, when he first encountered Freud's writings, to the point where he seems to break with the Freudian tradition. She points to ambiguity as a key element in Muschg's writing, an ambiguity achieved through the creation, consciously or subconsciously, of subtexts which in Muschg's otherwise largely mimetic work exist beneath the manifest text. These subtexts are networks of corresponding motifs that reveal the subconscious and either modify or contradict the main text. Böschstein identifies a number of such subtexts, particularly those associated with the important character triad Bischof/Zerrutt/Vampir.

Dierks' article, "Festigen und Lösen. Über die Grundgeste im Werk Adolf Muschgs," is an equally impressive piece of scholarship. His article and Böschstein's complement each other very nicely. He too deals with Muschg's semantic ambiguity, which seems to have become more pronounced, particularly in his ambitious novel *Das Licht und der Schlüssel*. Because everything seems to be in flux, because contradictory statements abound, critics have been frustrated in their attempts to interpret the work. Those who all along have maintained that the novel as a genre is beyond Muschg's reach felt vindicated.

It is probably safe to say that in his own contribution, Dierks comes to the defense of the author. He first chronicles how Muschg initially identified above all with Oedipus and Narcissus and subsequently moved on to include Ulysses, the archetype of the poet, thus placing himself into a long tradition reaching from Goethe via Nietzsche, Bachofen and Freud to Rilke and Thomas Mann and, more recently, to Christa Wolf. In discussing Muschg's characteristic ambiguity, he—like Muschg—uses terms such as dissolution and liquidation of barriers, concepts (perhaps even psycho-physical experiences) that manifest themselves in Muschg's works in his tendency to play with identities and analogies, to blur contours, to make paradoxical

statements and to cross the boundaries of time and space, fiction and reality—all in an attempt to lay bare the complicated inner processes of the subconscious. Although Dierks' observations are to some extent speculative, they open up new and very interesting avenues for future explorations of the links between Freud, Lacan and Muschg.

A third essay that stands out as particularly noteworthy is that by Eberhard Scheffele. In his long, lucidly written study he focuses on the intercultural aspects of Muschg's works about Japan in general (*Im Sommer des Hasen, Papierwände/Deshima*, "Subjekt und Objekt in Kamakura") and on the relationship between Muschg and Japan and Zen in particular; he argues that *Im Sommer des Hasen* is not so much a Japan novel as intercultural "Heimatroman," and he explores Muschg's intense interest in Zen, finding along the way interesting links between the figure of the psycho-therapist and the Zen master.

The original contributions by Gert Sautermeister and Klaus Pankow are less stimulating. In his essay called "In Mit-Leiden-schaft ziehen. Liebesgeschichten von Adolf Muschg," Sautermeister purports to deal with some of the aesthetic qualities of Muschg's love stories. He finds parallels between some of Muschg's stories and the genre of the novelle. Although he does provide a fairly interesting subjective reading of the three love stories "Der Turmhahn," "Der Zusenn," and "Ein Glockenspiel," his attempts at sketching out what he calls a poetics of love ("Skizze einer Liebes-Poetik"), are disappointing. Klaus Pankow contributes a very short essay called "Kränkung und Krankheit: Adolf Muschg—Aspekte seiner Poetik," which simply reiterates some of the issues raised previously concerning the relationship of literature and therapy. He is right, though, in pointing out that this area merits a more thorough treatment.

The critical reaction to the works written between 1979 and 1988 as reflected in the twenty-six reviews generally follows the pattern established early on: high praise for his short fiction, mounting skepticism vis-à-vis his novels. However, there does appear to be less discussion of Muschg's (in)famous "brilliance." All in all, he seems to have maintained his position as the contemporary Swiss master of short prose fiction.

A critical re-evaluation of Adolf Muschg's work was due. In spite of the unevenness of the contributions, the volume as a whole offers valuable insights into the life and works of one of today's most prominent literary figures. It is a thought-provoking addition to existing scholarship on Muschg (perhaps even the most comprehensive study of his works to date), which ought to provide the impetus for many more scholarly studies about this author.

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Guy Stern. *Literatur im Exil. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1959–1989*. München: Max Hueber Verlag, 1989. 428 pp.

These twenty-five studies represent thirty years of involvement in exile studies. The early struggle for recognition of exile studies as a legitimate field of inquiry led to various symposia, group projects, and attempts of international cooperation, still made difficult by cold war ideologies. From a first concern to preserve documents and the heritage of exile writers, the inquiry turned to a clearer determination of who these exiles were and what the exile had meant for their literary production. In ever wider

circles, exile studies began to encompass different issues of cultural and social history beyond questions of literary biography and evaluation. Also, it became apparent that exile studies demand comparative and interdisciplinary approaches. Guy Stern has been in the forefront of these developments, as a scholar, teacher, organizer, and communicator. The recent *Festschrift* in his honor is ample testimony to that. His personal exile experience gave him the advantage of a combined perspective: that of the detached scholar, and that of the concerned participant. He remained close to the exiles, and much information in these articles comes from firsthand experience, from interviews and direct communication, and not from reconstructive work in archives—which is in evidence as well. Exile studies, as exemplified in this volume, arose from the endeavor to counteract the dominant trend to bury the ugly past, to forget about those whom past regimes had thrown out of their homeland.

The expulsion of much of the German and Austrian cultural elite after 1933 and 1938 was without precedent. The significance of these writers, philosophers, artists, scholars, and publishers was such that the exodus could not be overlooked. Ironically, the exiles continued their “German” discourse in their host countries and have sometimes been accused of corrupting those countries with “German” ideas—as we have been told by Bloom, among others. Indeed, the “German-Jewish symbiosis” did exist in the cultural sphere.

Not all exile writers were Jewish, of course. The Jewish writers, however, had a particularly severe identity problem. The native language is a writer’s real home. Now these writers were told that they were not German, indeed, they could never even understand the German “soul.” And still, this was the source of their productivity, their livelihood in every sense of the word. This forced a more or less voluntary confrontation with one’s Jewishness as reflected in many texts of exile literature, prominently so for instance in Karl Wolfskehl’s poetry and letters, the object of the very first of Guy Stern’s articles.

Guy Stern divided the collection of his articles into five sections: 1) definition of exile studies, methods and theories; 2) acculturation vs. non-acculturation in the host countries; 3) themes and motifs in exile literature; 4) studies of individual authors and works; 5) the impact of the exiles on their host countries and their legacy. Special attention is given to German-speaking exiles in the United States and the question of their “Americanization” resp. their connections with American cultural and political life. The arrangement of the articles follows a thematic pattern and disregards chronology. Thus studies from different decades appear side by side. Sections 2 and 5 represent more recent concerns, however. With the exception of some biographical studies, individual interpretations are intended to be exemplary, indicative of a larger context. The reader who is used to associating names like Thomas Mann, Einstein, Schönberg, Mies van der Rohe with the German exile in the United States, may be disappointed at first. With the exception of an often quoted article on Bert Brecht’s *Galileo*, most other names in this book are hardly familiar to the non-specialist. There are valid reasons for this, but it needs to be said that the volume is neither an introduction to German-Austrian exile literature nor a survey of its most important representatives. It concentrates in particular on significant writers whose work reveals typical aspects of the exile experience, and who should be better known than they are. It is part of the project to preserve their memory.

Many documents of the exile, literary and biographical, remain unpublished.

Exile studies were forced into much primary research, called "Grundforschung." Guy Stern offers a welcome combination of such archival work with interpretative approaches. To mention one example (pp. 192–98), he not only reports on a forgotten treatment for a movie script by Alfred Neumann but also relates it to the exiles' view of Roosevelt, of American democracy, and the future of Germany. The preoccupation with the central themes of exile, flight and exile itself, runs through a number of the contributions. In several instances he analyzes the intrusion of autobiographical details and concerns into non-autobiographical texts. Another major theme is the question of a possible return to Germany and the continuation of exile after 1945. Recent histories of German literature have, unfortunately, used the historical dates rather rigidly for periodization, while it is obvious that major works of an exile character were written and/or published after 1945.

The exile writers of 1933 or 1938 were not a unified group. They wrote in diverse styles and genres, they belonged to different age groups, and they did not begin a new period of literature with their departure. They were united in their antifascism and in the loss of home and their audience. The communality of their experience lay in that elusive word "exile." The impact of exile on a writer is undeniable. But how can that impact be defined? This initial difficulty brought forth a debate on the definition of exile literature in which Guy Stern participated with two articles. The debate helped to legitimize the new approach, but most of the definitions were too general to be of much help for specific studies. Guy Stern's definitions and classifications are among closest to the concrete evidence. The two other, more recent, studies in this section reflect a richer experience in the field and provide a helpful orientation, especially the article on the typology of exile literature.

The dialogue character, the group effort that has characterized exile studies from their beginning, is very much in evidence in these articles. They were originally part of a different context. Sometimes they lose by being displaced in this manner, sometimes they gain as they are placed in a new context. Although the information from all contributions is still pertinent today, the presentation of some of the older pieces seems dated. They have become historical. But the majority, especially those of the last ten years, present issues and insights that are fresh and, in most cases, call for further research. This is part of the stimulating character of the book.

On the technical side: the book is well printed, but it could have use one more round of proofreading. One third of the articles were translated from English into German. The praise of the translator in the preface notwithstanding, not all translations seem perfect. But that may be too much to ask.

Young scholars should find a good number of ideas for future research: besides the last two articles of the first section, they might read the article on the book burning, on Hilde Domin, on Friedrich Torberg's novel, on Arno Reinfrank, and the entire last section. The echoes of exiles and exile literature in recent American novels provide an especially intriguing line of inquiry. Guy Stern is as active as ever. It is premature to speak of a life's work. But it is the result of three decades of dedication to a task which is central in a person's life. And collectively, even more than individually, the voice of the German-speaking antifascist exile speaks from these essays.

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