

and several of Lessing's short stories, Budhos describes the damage inflicted on women by "the rigid boundaries erected by the farming community" and "the corrosive influence of the land" (36-37). Once again, I do not find the unremitting determinism in these texts that Budhos seems to, but I am struck by her perception that: "In every instance, Lessing points to a direct connection between the illusion of possibilities (expanses) and the actual limitations (enclosure) placed upon community and women" (43).

My disagreements with Budhos's interpretations of these texts notwithstanding, I regard her ideas about them to be compelling evidence that she has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of Doris Lessing. I am deeply disappointed that the textual weaknesses of this particular work were too significant to ignore--for both Lessing and Budhos herself deserve better than this example of inexperienced scholarship.

Alan Singer

## *A METAPHORICS OF FICTION: DISCONTINUITY AND DISCOURSE IN THE MODERN NOVEL*

Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1984. Pp. 183, \$18.00

Reviewed by Jerry A. Varsava

*A Metaphorics of Fiction* considers the function of rhetorical patterning in the modern novel. Though something more than just a tropological study, *Metaphorics* has, at the same time, a self-proclaimed "formalist orientation" (42). Relying on a mostly discerning eclecticism, Singer identifies a key rhetorical device that orders twentieth-century experimental fiction. In his view, it is *catachresis*, "the renegade trope," that shapes the modern experimental tradition. Ignoring characterization and plot development, rejecting naive mimetic strategies, the catachrestic fiction emphasizes discontinuity through its manipulation of an autotelic language. Singer coins the term "metaphorics" (apparently on the model of "poetics") to describe a critical practice that maps and explains the tropic center of fiction. *Metaphorics* recalls at first Hayden White's tropological study of nineteenth-century historiography. However, in contrast to White's taxonomy of tropes, Singer restricts himself to a consideration of catachresis. After summarily outlining his theoretical interests in the two opening chapters, he goes on to apply his *metaphorics* to three experimental novels--Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, John Hawkes's *Second Skin*, and Beckett's *How It Is*.

Interestingly, the two theorists who have influenced Singer's thought the most--Derrida and Ricoeur--offer radically divergent theories of metaphor and it is precisely a theory of metaphor that must ground Singer's *metaphorics*. Singer uses Derrida's "White Mythology" essay to attack the substitution theory of trope. According to the substitution theory, language is transparent and instrumental. "White Mythology" promotes catachresis as the "archetope of deconstruction." Catachresis is a destabilized trope "whose terms of resemblance," Singer notes, "strain the conceptual framework within which they are designated" (41).

Though adopting aspects of Derrida's theory of metaphor, Singer's debt to him is limited. Unlike Derrida, Singer wishes "to draw conclusions--specifically about the *kinds* rather than the *truthfulness* of knowledge made possible by destabilized trope" (43). However, given his acceptance of Ricoeur's theory of metaphor--based on a notion of *productive* not *re-productive*, mimesis--Singer's disagreements with Derrida would appear to be fundamental, rather than merely focal, as he seems to imply, and his selective appropriation of Derridean views in need of greater explanation. Singer appeals throughout *Metaphorics* to Ricoeur's theory of metaphor. Regrettably, he does not discuss Ricoeur in any detail until the last two chapters. As a consequence of this oversight, Singer's theory of metaphor remains inchoate for much of his study. In failing to contrast the positions

of Derrida and Ricoeur in any other but suggestive terms, by neglecting to consider areas of conflict, Singer's eclecticism appears hurried on occasion.

Singer notes that metaphor *qua* trope is itself "a metaphor for the epistemological link between texts and ways of worldly knowledge" (23). In his critical readings Singer reviews how the manipulation of catachresis in *Nightwood*, *Second Skin*, and *How It Is* illustrates a specific epistemological bias toward skepticism and disjunction. In its articulation of discontinuity--rhetorical and psychological--catachresis is, as Singer notes, inherently reflexive. Rejecting the classical view of language as denomination and reference, each author emphasizes the generative capacity of tropic play, the tropes of fiction, and their manipulation, serve as homologues for epistemologies, human desire, and ideologies. Though not novel, this is a significant observation and, as theoretical premise, promotes a research project often identified though less frequently undertaken. His critical readings consider, then, "how the text produces an image of its own productivity" (75). His readings are imaginative, for the most part, though there are a couple of weaknesses. Syntax and jargon burden, on occasion, the flow of his discussion. Further terminological opacity sometimes lends an annoying allusiveness. In any event, these shortcomings notwithstanding, Singer's critical readings succeed in substantiating the theoretical claims that would support them.

Alexandros Papadiamantis

## TALES FROM A GREEK ISLAND

Translated with an introduction and notes by Elizabeth Constantinides

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. Pp. xx + 176, \$16.95

Reviewed by John Taylor

In his classic *History of Neo-Hellenic Literature* (5th ed., 1972) Professor C. Th. Dimaras declares in effect that the work of the Greek writer Alexandros Papadiamantis can be read with pleasure only by people who are not connoisseurs of serious literature. But if until recently a large number of professors of literature have seconded this judgment, nearly all the outstanding writers and poets of Greece, from Papadiamantis's time (1851-1911) to the present, have championed "the saint of modern Greek letters," "the father of modern Greek prose." The poet Kostis Palamas counted among his early defenders. For C.P. Cavafy, Papadiamantis was the "pinnacle of pinnacles." Odysseus Elytis, who devoted a book to him, wrote in *The Axion Esti*: "Brothers, wherever evil finds you / wherever your minds grow muddled . . . invoke Alexandros Papadiamantis." And to these praises could be added articles, studies, literary memoirs, and creative works written by dozens of other Greek writers, such as the materials collected in *Alexandros Papadiamantis* (1979), *Fota olofota* (1981) and *Mnimosyno tou Alex. Papadiamanti* (1981). With the simultaneous publication of an exemplary critical edition by N.D. Triantafyllopoulos, it can be said at last that academic interest in Papadiamantis has been growing. This important translation by Elizabeth Constantinides has been impatiently awaited: only a few of Papadiamantis's 170 stories have previously appeared in English, though three different versions of his novella *The Murderess* (1903) do exist.

Above all, it is Papadiamantis's use of language which the Greek poets have praised, a richly textured, musical prose typically composed of the purist language (*katharevousa*) in the narrative parts and of the dialect of his native island, Skiathos, in the dialogues; but, as Constantinides points out, also complicated by the use of straightforward demotic forms, Byzantine ecclesiastical Greek and even Ancient Greek. Excepting Emmanuel Roidis (1836-1904) and Georgios Vizyinos (1849-1896), two outstanding contemporaries who also used *katharevousa* in combination with other levels of language, no Greek writer is more difficult to translate.