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Book Reviews

Donne's "Anniversaries" and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1973. Pp. ix + 386. $16.50.

When Donne told Ben Jonson that his conception of Elizabeth Drury in the Anniversary poems was pointed toward "the Idea of a Woman and not as she was," he set up the paradigm (or is it the enigma?) to which all students of the *Anniversaries* have felt compelled to respond. As readers of Donne know, suggestions about the meaning of the girl in the Anniversary poems, this "Idea of a Woman," have occupied much of the critical attention directed toward those poems. Most studies have dealt with the extra-poetic image which "she" attains—e. g., William Empson's Logos (*Some Versions of Pastoral* [1950]), Marjorie Nicolson's Astraea (*The Breaking of the Circle* [1960]), Frank Manley's Wisdom (*John Donne: The Anniversaries* [1963]), Richard Hughes' St. Lucy (*The Progress of the Soul* [1968]). While some of these identifications have added to our understanding of what lies behind Donne's poetic conception, none has convincingly demonstrated how the girl reaches the hyperbolic heights attributed to her while remaining, in some certain sense, the fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Drury. Now Barbara Lewalski presents her answers to questions that have puzzled Donne critics, and the results are impressive indeed. Her book, the first full-length study with the *Anniversaries* as the singularly dominant concern, asserts that "these remarkable poems transform conventional praise into a symbolic mode" and seeks to reveal "how they do so, what ideas and materials they draw upon in the process, and how they influence subsequent poems of praise." (p. 5)

The particular strength of Professor Lewalski's study is that it defines two larger parameters of Donne's *Anniversaries* and follows that contextual investigation with a close look at individual moments, images, and words in the poems themselves. Professor Lewalski's work is thus distinguished from most other studies of the *Anniversaries*, which have been devoted largely to questions of structure and the identification of "she," but which have generally neglected the necessary focus on the poems as poems.

Professor Lewalski's book is divided into four sections, the first two setting up the literary and theological contexts in which the *Anniversaries* are to be placed, the third concentrating on the poems themselves, and the fourth discussing the legacy and influence of the poems.

Covering some of the same ground previously trod by O. B. Hardison in *The Enduring Monument* (1962), Professor Lewalski first describes the characteristics of epideictic poetry in general and of Donne's poetry of compliment in particular. She focuses on two crucial matters relevant to all poetry of this genre: the stance of the speaker toward his subject and the image of the person praised. Her investigation leads her to conclude that most epideictic poetry of

Donne's contemporaries follows classical and Renaissance rubrics governing poetic and rhetorical praises. The subject is praised as an ideal type, an exemplar of virtues, or perhaps as an "image" of virtue, but a proper sense of decorum governs the degree of hyperbole involved. If the subject were indeed "great" (Queen Elizabeth or Prince Henry, for example) the praise would be correspondingly hyperbolic. If the subject were more "ordinary" the praise would be subdued. Furthermore, the stance of the speaker and the assumption of a personal relationship between speaker and subject qualify the potential extravagance of the praise. Professor Lewalski finds that, while Donne's poetry of compliment clearly aligns itself with that of his contemporaries in certain obvious ways, it is also strikingly different in equally obvious ways. Most important, she declares, is Donne's intention to load his poetic analyses with profound spiritual truths. Donne's epideictic poetry involves no confirmation of moral types exemplified by the subjects (as in Ben Jonson's poetry of this genre); it is not governed by the usual restrictions of decorum nor is it mere praise of someone socially close to the speaker. Asserting that Donne aims toward "metaphysical inquiry into the bases of human worth," (p. 44) Professor Lewalski discovers in his poetry two key characteristics: the speaker's meditative stance which encourages the exploration into truth, and his symbolic conception of the subject of his praise. "An important perspective upon the *Anniversary* poems," she concludes, "is afforded by this demonstration that Donne's speaker [in his poetry of compliment] characteristically assumes a meditative stance toward the person praised, and that the praises are not directed to the specific moral qualities of particular individuals . . . but rather to the potentialities of the human soul as image of God." (p. 70)

This conclusion to the study of the literary context of the *Anniversaries* leads Professor Lewalski appropriately into the second section of her study and its concern with the theological context. It is here, I think, that she makes her most valuable contribution to our understanding of the meaning of the "Idea of a Woman" and thus of the poems as a whole. Contending that "Donne's poems of compliment are informed by a conception of meditation strikingly different from the Ignation method," (p. 74) she leads us through an array of information relative to the Protestant meditation and the Protestant sermon, forms which she shows to be nearly identical in method and purpose. Whereas Ignation meditation (as described by Martz) encourages the meditator to apply himself to the subject of his meditation, the Protestant version "calls for the application of the subject to the self, indeed for the location of the subject in the self." (p. 103) The distinction is important, for it leads to Professor Lewalski's judgment that in Donne's poems of compliment "the subject is located, embodied, in the person who is praised in the poem, and then it is apprehended by the speaker (and his auditory) through meditation on that person." (p. 107) Since, according to Donne's own testimony, the subject of the *Anniversaries* is the "Idea" of a woman, Professor Lewalski seeks to determine what, for Donne, that Idea was. Her basic conclusion is stated early, and her support for it is thorough and impressive. Donne's praise of Elizabeth Drury as the Idea of a Woman is, in brief, praise of "the image of God created and restored in her." (p. 113) The key term which Professor Lewalski employs time and again is "regenerate Christian," for that, to her, best describes the essential conception which lies behind Donne's

treatment of Elizabeth Drury. The identification seems, perhaps, all too obvious, but Professor Lewalski takes great pains to show how and why Donne's image becomes truly symbolic, how there is invested in that symbol all of the spiritual significances explored in the poems. "Donne's ordering symbol in the *Anniversary* poems," she asserts, "has its basis . . . in his definition of the Archetype or Idaea of the human person in terms of the image of God he or she bears, and specifically in the multiple perspectives which Donne's Protestant theology permitted him to employ in analyzing a regenerate Christian as the restored image of God." (p. 140)

Professor Lewalski supports her contention by an extensive investigation of contemporary devotional tracts, sermons (especially funeral sermons), and Protestant theories of hermeneutics. Although some of this–specifically the studies of Donne's own sermon–might be questioned because of their retrospective look at the earlier *Anniversaries*, the weight of the evidence is surely undeniable. Equally striking is Professor Lewalski's ability never really to lose sight of Elizabeth Drury or the *Anniversaries* during her wide-ranging investigation. Each area of her study leads up to the consummate portrait of Elizabeth Drury as both unique and typical: "the paradox the reader is expected to perceive is that through an analysis of Elizabeth Drury's uniqueness as a regenerate soul, Donne is examining the condition of humankind as its potentialities are defined by the creation in the order of nature of God's image in us, its restoration in the order of grace, and its forthcoming glorification in heaven." (p. 164) The extra-poetic key to understanding Donne's effort to invest in a single person these regenerative capabilities is the Protestant theory of typological symbolism. The Protestant emphasis, and also Donne's, is to see the individual Christian as a recapitulation of experiences set forth in both the Old and the New Testaments. Donne, according to Professor Lewalski, takes this a step further, by developing an "incarnational" symbolism which sees universal truths embodied, incarnated in particular individuals (e.g., Elizabeth Drury). With this typological and incarnational focus, then, "the symbolic meanings attaching to Elizabeth Drury pertain to her as regenerate Christian bearing the image of God restored by grace, and by that token both recapitulating and foreshadowing the other conditions of human goodness past and to come." (p. 163)

The last two sections of the book I will mention more briefly, though Professor Lewalski's reading of the two poems is, as I have suggested, a particularly illuminating one. Having established in convincing fashion the framework for her interpretation, she proceeds to show how Donne's symbolic mode works in the poems. Her analyses are clearly supportive of her earlier focus on Elizabeth Drury as regenerate soul, embodying all of the spiritual potentialities claimed for her in the poems. She also adds to our understanding of other elements in the poem, particularly the roles of the poet and his assumed audience. The role of the poet as surgical dissecter of a diseased carcass in the *Anatomy* is a public one, and the correlative response of an ideal audience is necessary if the action is to have proper effect. Or, seen from another perspective, Elizabeth Drury is defined as regenerate soul to the end that the auditory will be led "to repudiate the sick world insofar as it is mere nature, and to take their places in the 'new world' of grace." (p. 243) *The Second Anniversarie* is more nearly a meditation on the soul, but even here, Professor Lewalski suggests, an audience is involved.

Rather than being addressed directly, it is as if an audience is overhearing the important words of the speaker. Different in method and tone, the *Progres* nonetheless works with the *Anatomy* in providing a harmonious and complete portrait of Elizabeth Drury as regenerate soul, a portrait which should have a renewing effect on the regenerate world which hears the words of the speaker. Like a growing number of Donne critics, Professor Lewalski affirms that "the two poems are integrally related and constitute an artistically ordered and completed sequence." (p. 303)

In a rather anticlimactic conclusion, though one useful to her conception of the originality and influence of Donne's symbolic mode, Professor Lewalski looks at the "legacy" of the *Anniversaries*, poems written later in the century which are in some way indebted to Donne's poetic commemoration. While doing much to confirm her view of the *Anniversaries*, Professor Lewalski also convincingly gives the lie to the previously-held assumption that the *Anniversaries* were not treated with much regard in the seventeenth century. A reader may find some of this investigation—particularly that devoted to rather insignificant poems—a bit tedious and unnecessary, but her surprising and captivating analysis of the last poem in the "legacy," Marvell's "Upon Appleton House," is surely worth the time it takes to get there.

This is a long book, but one full of impressive learning and unyielding attention to the poems which are the effective climax of Donne's poetic efforts. Professor Lewalski never lets us get far into theory or context without reminding us that it all points to the poems themselves. With that consistent guide and with her own impressive comments on individual moments in the *Anniversaries*, Professor Lewalski has contributed much to our recognition of Donne's achievement. Her book is unquestionably the most significant study of the poems to date.

PAUL A. PARRISH

Texas A & M University

The Young Romantics and Critical Opinion 1807-1824: Poetry of Byron, Shelley, and Keats As Seen by Their Contemporary Critics by Theodore Redpath. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973. Pp. 544. $11.95.

Before the late 1960's, scholarly work on literary reviewing in England in the early nineteenth century was sparse to say the least. To anyone interested in such criticism the opportunity for delving in virgin soil seemed infinite; at least the need for studies, anthologies, and scholarly collected editions appeared obvious. The initial need was quickly met, however. Since 1969 there has been a general study of all the reviews then operating, as well as a selected edition of the reviews of the five major poets of the time. Routledge's Critical Heritage series has gone over much of the same ground, providing collections of the reviews with introductory surveys (including volumes on Byron and Keats). Another collection of contemporary criticism of Keats was published last year; and in 1972 a nine-volume collected edition of the reviews of the five major Romantic poets was produced in facsimile.

To have been in the midst of producing in the early 1970's a volume of and about the reviews of Byron, Shelley, and Keats must, therefore, have been unnerving–such is the stuff of which the legendary suicides of doctoral candidates are made. And such was the situation in which Professor Redpath must have found himself while completing his *The Young Romantics*. Although he neglects to point out the fact, *The Young Romantics* was at least initially intended as the second of a two-volume set entitled *Romantic Perspectives*, the first and much more modest volume of which (covering the first generation of Romantic poets) was published in 1964. Oddly enough, despite its general introduction on the reviewing of the period, this volume is not even listed in the generous bibliography he gives here.

The present volume is both a study of the reviews of the second generation of major Romantic poets and an anthology of passages from those reviews. But in both parts Professor Redpath has limited himself to eighteen out of the sixty-plus journals as they criticized only certain more "widely read" works by Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The limitations set do allow for more extended treatment of the reviews and works selected, but of course at some cost in scope.

The volume is actually divided into three parts. There is (1) a general survey of the reception of Byron, Shelley, and Keats by each of eighteen Reviews presented individually. Then there are (2) separate, (approximately) thirty-page accounts of the reception of each of the three poets, each account followed by (3) an anthology of passages mostly from the reviews but with some critical comments taken from letters and memoirs.

This organization is a bit odd. In the Preface Professor Redpath admits to overlapping, and it is not quite clear why such a construction was chosen to begin with. The account journal by journal of the reception of a limited number of works by each of the three poets seems to me to have very limited usefulness. To have combined these discussions with the account of the reception poet by poet would, I believe, have produced a more serviceable book. And the overlapping that inevitably results is quite real, as the cross-references in the footnotes testify.

The two separate accounts include discussions of criticisms of the poets by their contemporaries outside the reviewing periodicals, but nothing much comes of it. As Redpath himself insists several times, the really valuable critiques are contained in the periodicals of the time. The point of view taken toward those periodicals by Redpath in any case I find unexceptionable. Unlike so many previous commentators, he is anything but antagonistic toward the reviewers; he is indeed both tolerant and level-headed in his treatment of them. When discussing the moral, religious, and political concerns encountered in the reviews, for example, he observes judiciously:

> When Scott rates Byron for his attitude to Waterloo, for instance, may this not act upon us as a salutary admonition to take more seriously aspects of Byron's work which were for the poet himself matters of burning concern, and which we may only neglect at the cost of rendering our critical attitude to the work regrettably superficial? (p. 177)

My only quarrel on the point of attitude is a certain faintheartedness in his dealings with the criticism of Shelley's works. To the onslaught of the *Quarterly*

on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound,* he offers this equivocation: "The review is extreme, but it is well written, and some of the detailed analysis is of considerable interest." (p. 41) "Interesting," in fact, becomes a kind of counter used to dispense faint praise to reviews with which he does not quite agree (as on pp. 312, 322, 323).

In the same way, the anthology of reviews seems to me slanted toward selections that are most favorable to the poetry, although this sort of impression could easily be merely subjective. Professor Redpath, in any event, makes little attempt to convey the feel of the original reviews in their entirety. He does clearly designate what quotations have been omitted and marks the location of ellipses in the text, but most selections consist of bits and pieces rather than entire reviews. This method admittedly allows for a wider coverage, and yet a good deal is lost as well.

The accuracy of the texts and the scholarship surrounding them is well-nigh flawless. Several times (as with John Thelwall and William Roberts), however, definite attributions of authorship are made where the identification is only probable. And there is occasionally some speculation that appears as bold assertion: "His [Byron's] political career at home did not last, but it had the effect of making critics in liberal or radical periodicals somewhat more favourable, and critics in Tory periodicals somewhat less favourable, to his poems than they might otherwist have been." (p. 181) There is simply no way if knowing such a thing for certain.

Those sections that constitute the study of the reviewing are clearly written, although the style could hardly be called vigorous. Too many constructions begin with the flabby "It is certainly true that . . ." or "It must of course be remembered that . . ." or "We need to bear in mind that. . . ." These occur frequently enough to become irritating, especially since they are so easily expunged from one's writing.

It is doubtless time for more detailed studies of individual Reviews and of the treatment of individual literary figures at the hands of the reviewers. The *Quarterly Review,* for example, has never been subjected to a full-length study, nor has the contemporary reception of any one of the poets. Professor Redpath's present volume shows a tendency in that direction, with a narrowing of focus to three poets, but the scope is perhaps still too wide. If, however, there is need for a quick survey of the critical reception afforded the works of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, a survey moreover that contains a good deal of intelligent comment followed by a large selection of the criticism in question, *The Young Romantics* will fill such a need in relatively inexpensive form.

JOHN O. HAYDEN

University of California, Davis

Sir Harry Vane: His Life and Times, 1613–1662 by J. H. Adamson and H. F. Folland. Boston: Gambit Inc. 1973. Pp. 498, plates. $10.00.

Those inclined to read books about the seventeenth century, whether out of strictly professional interest or for the fire and ice displays of the period's great personalities, have perhaps had their appetites somewhat sated recently by large biographies and historical novels, like Antonia Fraser's *Cromwell* and George Garrett's *Death of the Fox.* But J. H. Adamson and H. F. Folland's new biography of Sir Henry Vane, for those who truly love the era of England's Civil War, has all the style and creative insight of Garrett's novel, while it manages to avoid the turgid excesses of scholarship that mar Lady Fraser's study of Cromwell. Yet this fine biography may be overlooked by both scholars and idlers, simply because Henry Vane, after all, rings few bells with either the academic or the non-academic public.

Sir Henry Vane (called Sir Harry for most of his life, to distinguish him from his father, the elder Sir Henry Vane, who was also a member of Parliament but variously a monarchist and a republican, depending on whose army occupied London at the time) was, indeed, sometime friend and fellow revolutionary with Oliver Cromwell, the warty-faced cavalry officer who rose to protect what God (and Oliver) had won on the battlefield from Charles I. But if it was men like Cromwell who slogged through mud to establish Parliamentary rule once and for all in England, it was men like Sir Henry Vane the Younger who provided the intellectual and mystical manifesto for taking up arms against a rightful king and deposing him for an even more rightful rule of religion and holiness. But for all his intellectual and spiritual support of the "Good Old Cause," as the revolution came to be known by those who never lost faith in its aims, Sir Henry remained throughout his life a pacifist. Naturally, his enemies (and many of his friends, for that matter) noticed the irony of a proclaimed revolutionary who disdained the shedding of blood, but as Adamson and Folland so humanely reveal, such ironies and contradictions in human behavior were the distinguishing oxymoronic hallmarks of the seventeenth century. Vane (whose name, incidentally, was all too handy in that political age to the punsters who satirized unkindly what a man could neither control nor change) was the prophet for revolution who combined mystical visions and the reformer's impulse to help lead his fellow Parliamentarians into open rebellion against the Stuart Monarchy. Whereas more timid souls in the Parliament of 1640 wished merely to rid Charles I of his "unworthy" counselors, Vane knew that he who takes out his sword against his king must throw away the scabbard. Vane was the ultimate revolutionary: once the Civil War was enjoined, he was prepared to march England forward into the New Jerusalem without a single backward glance. And all of this while keeping himself a pacifist! No wonder the age has been characterized as schizophrenic.

Cromwell, of course, shared much of Vane's vision for a new order, entire, in England, although Oliver was certainly more realistic: let the Sir Henry Vanes write the religious and political paeans to freedom of the human spirit; the Oliver Cromwells were left to transcribe vision into law, and the Oliver Cromwells knew full well that personal freedom must sometimes stand servant to practicality. So Cromwell, with the help of public men like Sir Henry Vane,

won the war against King Charles, and that unhappy, vacillating monarch was helped out of England's chaotic vale of tears and into the unlikely role of martyr by the public executioner. The war was won, the king destroyed, his counselors routed, but Vane perceived sooner than many that an old tyranny had been replaced by a new. Sir Henry was a True Seeker, a man who believed fanatically in his right to serve as his own priest and bishop, a Christian who sought the monarchy of Christ as literal earthly ruler. In matters of religion, which for Sir Henry extended into every corner of secular life as well as into choir and vestry of church and cathedral, the individual must be absolutely free, his own judge, jury, and bailiff. But such freedom and a republic so constituted would be a labor for Titans in England where no precedents existed, and precedence was everything, even to a people so lately freed from monarchy by the most violent and unprecedented of takings-off. Under Cromwell's total control, England was no kingdom fit for Christ's rule; it was a hedge of planted pikes no free-thinker could easily cross. Vane was thrown into a moral dilemma: should he totally reject what the Revolution had wrought as flawed and hence evil? Or should he participate in the new government with the forlorn hope that it could be hammered and tinkered into wholeness? As Adamson and Folland express it (words fit for our own age of aggrieved reformers):

> Perhaps the only fortunate revolutionaries are those who die young. Those who survive come to know the silent rust, the wingless moth of corruption and then, under the pressure of some unusual event, comes the beginning of the long inevitable walk with compromise.

So Vane compromised when his conscience allowed it, did the public's work conscientiously through the 1650's as England's revolution became increasingly a new tyranny, and then after Cromwell's own death, an increasing chaos of opposed armies and religions and mercantile interests. England had become no republican paradise as he had hoped, so Vane retreated to the only home a disappointed rebel can claim—the walled fastness of his soul. There he nurtured a certain knowledge that although Christ would not arrive to establish his divine rule during Vane's own lifetime, perhaps soon afterward, and the mental fix of the revolutionary was replaced by the fix for martyrdom. Vane surely sensed that the Monarchy would be restored soon, that his own conscience would not bend so far as to acknowledge the rule of a royal son whose father he had so lately helped depose. Vane likely foresaw his own death at the hands of Charles II's executioner on Tower Hill in 1662; the old revolutionary had seen the Revolution define itself harshly and precisely, the full circle from old order to old order, the inexorable circuit that the headsman's axe described in the air on Tower Hill.

Adamson and Folland have put into their biography what Edmund Waller, a royalist poet who suffered in his own way the wrenching of seventeenth century England, said both good poems and good lives should contain: form and style. Style in this book, especially, with its characteristic wit and leveling ironies makes luminescent the entire seventeenth century in ways completely alien to the scholar's customary hackwork. Some readers will perhaps complain that the book cites no sources, offers no footnotes, and this is a problem; how is one to know, without notes, the string of information which led the authors to their insights and

interpretations? But nagging as the total absence of notes may be, a reader can forgive much after reading a passage like the following:

> Cromwell and Vane represent two of history's most persistent types: Cromwell was a man of energy and arms with all the forces of his time funneling through his body; a man who knew the fear that sits like a cap of snow on the heart before the charge of the horse, and the fierce triumph when the God of Battles shows his face; a man who knew that his own life, that vulnerable flame, had burned through cyclone and deluge with the wrath of armed men. To know such things was to know God. In contrast was Vane, leader of the war party yet a despiser of war; never elated, puzzled by the complexity of all the "signs" which history and providence whispered to more reserved men; more intellectually sophisticated than Cromwell; a man who found at last that for him there was only one haven, the haven of the soul, where, as God sent sunlight or frost, dew or drought, one knew His will.

Such writing reveals a grasp of facts quite beyond what footnotes can confirm and a powerful, humane understanding of personality and cross-currents which George Garrett communicated in *Death of the Fox* and which Antonia Fraser never achieved with *Cromwell.* Those familiar with Adamson and Folland's previous collaboration, *The Shepherd of the Ocean,* their 1969 biography of Sir Walter Ralegh, will not be surprised to hear that *Sir Harry Vane* has the characteristic wit and style and an impressive command of history and literature. Long may these collaborators thole, and toughly!

J. W. WILLIAMSON

Appalachian State University

Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes by Donald J. Greiner. Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973. Pp. xix + 260. $7.50.

In his preface Mr. Greiner tells us that John Hawkes "occupies a peculiar place in contemporary American fiction." He hopes to place him by exploring one central vein in his work—the odd juxtaposition of comedy and terror.

Mr. Greiner recognizes that Hawkes, like other "black humorists," refuses to "verify a moral code because verification would allude to order and sanity in a world which they see as fractured and absurd." Without a verifiable morality *The Cannibal,* for example, does not yield to easy truth. There is no "right" or "wrong"—the Germans and Americans are almost equated!—and little concern with "reality." *The Cannibal* is *self-contained.* But Mr. Greiner understands that even such a novel is a strategy, a formal design which somewhat manages to project outward and does, indeed, say significant, frightening things about loyalty, politics, and national welfare.

Mr. Greiner offers a rapid survey of traditional comedy before he turns to close individual readings of Hawkes' novels. Although he is somewhat rigid in his comments on Meredith and Bergson, he establishes forcefully the fact that for Hawkes comedy solves little—it does not resolve tensions; it does not save anyone. Mr. Greiner stresses the *incompleteness* of response: "Hawkes' charac-

ters are not stoics. They respond to their predicaments, but their responses are usually at odds with what the reader expects. In many ways his novels are comedies of the inappropriate response." Mr. Greiner's phrasing is exact. Not only do Hawkes' characters misunderstand their situations (over-or-under responding to them) but we, in turn, stand amazed at their inexplicable actions. There is double separation—the character from the situation and the reader from the character.

Perhaps the best example is again from *The Cannibal.* The Duke pursues a boy and equates him with a fox. But he does not stop here. He proceeds to cut up the boy-as-fox. He does more. He uses the parts to feed the boy's aunt. There is grim humor in the "inappropriate" reactions, but the comedy is so terrifying at the same time that we don't know how to respond adequately. We have so many feelings—fear of "castration," sense of sympathy, knowledge of our own humanity—that we are strained, as it were, beyond our limits. And we remain "incomplete." Thus Mr. Greiner writes: "In such a dreamlike world what appears to be abnormal to the reader with traditional notions of humor is real and normal to Hawkes' protagonists. Many times the reader is divorced enough from these characters so that the comedy of the inappropriate response prompts him to laugh *at* them even though he may pity them, as for example when the Duke cuts up the boy to make a soup he will serve to the boy's aunt."

When he turns to his sharp readings of Hawkes' novels, Mr. Greiner continues to underline discontinuity and inappropriateness. He does not generalize. He realizes that he must study individual passages—images, shifts of tone—and he is such a good critic that he enhances our understanding of novels we thought were "simple."

I think, for example, of his study of *The Owl* (in the chapter on Hawkes' early experimentations). He tells us at one point: "Hawkes endows his first-person narrator with an unusual omniscience, which allows him to move anywhere in time to supply information traditionally unavailable to the first-person narrator. The effect is startling, for the technique seems to give Il Gufo complete freedom from authorial control and thus adds to his aura as supreme master of this damned town." Mr. Greiner is never far from his "comic terror." Il Gufo is "comic" for us in that because he knows all, he refuses to discriminate between things. He "over-responds" (in the way the Duke does) and by doing so, he is beyond the human sphere. He cannot laugh; we can. It is this tension between us and him that creates startling dislocations, comic terror.

There is another point. Hawkes and Il Gufo also "battle" over freedom. Il Gufo knows too much! When we notice the sly "game" over control taking place between author and creator—a "game" which reflects all the "games" in the novel—we understand an underlying theme of Hawkes: What, he seems to ask, is the limit of art? Is art creative and/or destructive?

Hawkes raises here (and elsewhere) the same questions Poe does in "The Oval Portait" or Melville in "Bartleby, the Scrivener." He believes that although art is "good"—it helps us to know reality—it does partially cannibalize (consume) life for its own ends. By framing human behavior in words, it destroys total substance and digests it. I see a parallel between Hawkes' narrators (often using others) and his unconscious fears that he does the same thing in his novels. Mr. Greiner hints at these mirrors in his analysis.

Perhaps the best chapter in this well-reasoned book is the one on *The Blood Oranges*. Mr. Grenier breaks new ground here. Not only does he explain the novel's mythological and literary references—he succeeds in showing how this recent novel represents, in many ways, a culmination of Hawkes' deceived (and deceiving!) narrators. He writes: "We distort *The Blood Oranges* when we insist on Cyril's meanness without a corresponding recognition of his ridiculousness." Cyril, like Il Gufo and Zizendorf, tends to become more than human, seeing the glory of all-consuming sex. He is unaware of dangers because he is, to use a pat word, "obsessive." We laugh at his "over-responses," but we are also terrified by his lack of "proper" feeling. He is beyond good and evil; his explorations shake us. Mr. Greiner explains clearly why our reactions are so violently aroused.

Mr. Greiner has, therefore, given us a useful, exciting study of these difficult novels. He will help all future critics of Hawkes.

Irving Malin

City College of New York

Cubism / Futurism by Max Kozloff. New York: Charterhouse, 1973. Pp. xix + 234. 92 illustrations (in black and white). $9.95.

For Max Kozloff, painting and sculpting are ways of seeing and thinking. Which is *not* to say that Kozloff "reduces" art to ideas. Quite the contrary: it is exactly as he describes the visual particularities of Cubist and Futurist works that he reveals their significance in the realm of perception and thought.

Sparing and judicious in his use of verbal statements emanating from avant-garde movements, Kozloff prefers to discuss what Braque and Picasso made rather than what they—or explainers like Metzinger, Gleizes and Apollinaire—said. Even the highly verbal Futurists are seen more than heard in the pages of Kozloff's book, while the Futurists' "leader," F. T. Marinetti is reduced to an uncharacteristic taciturnity and inconspicuousness. Marinetti and others in the Futurist movement made a number of important verbal statements. To leave them out is to diminish the Futurists' importance somewhat, but it is refreshing to find the art, rather than the artists, doing most of the talking for a change.

One may ask, of course: *should* the art of that era—especially Futurist art—be surrounded by an uncharacteristic silence? For Kozloff's purposes, the answer seems to be yes. For the purposes of someone seeking to "fix" Cubism and Futurism in the febrile milieu of European art during the four or five years before World War One, the answer would probably be no. One may feel cheated—given the general title of the book—to find Kozloff focussing on paintings and carvings, to the nearly total exclusion of conversations, letters, manifestos, newspapers, magazines, cafes, theatres, galleries, and studios—those places where so much that constitutes a movement takes place. While Kozloff gives passing attention to the complex of events—political, artistic, social and personal—that surrounded the production of Cubist and Futurist art, he is far more interesting and instructive when he talks about the works themselves.

Readers will find that two other expectations raised by the book's title are not fulfilled. Kozloff does not cover the movements in their entirety. Only certain works produced between about 1908 and 1914 are dealt with in detail. There is little consideration given to minor figures in the two movements or to major figures who might be placed at the peripheries of Cubism or Futurism. No attention is given to Futurist expressions in music, theatre, and cinema, and there are only some very brief comments on Futurist literature and on Cubism in forms other than painting, sculpture and collage. Kozloff simply is not interested in cataloguing or surveying the times or the movements.

Nor does he examine closely the possible conjunctions or confrontations between the two movements. He refers briefly to adjustments the Futurists made in their work as their awareness of Cubism grew, but, in general, Kozloff prefers to concentrate on central figures—Braque, Gris, Picasso, Balla, Severini, Boccioni, Carrà and Russolo—rather than explore the outer reaches or possible meeting points of the two movements in, say, Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, Epstein's *Rock Drill*, Wyndham Lewis' Vorticist work, or various works of Villon, the Russian Constructivists or the *de Stijl* group. Léger and Delaunay receive some attention, but the direction of Kozloff's argument is away from a consideration of junctures where Futurist and Cubist concerns might be found to meet, cross, conflict or interlock. Kozloff takes to heart the separating function of that slash line in *Cubism / Futurism.*

The book's form is true to the graphics of its title. Seven chapters on Cubism are followed by eight chapters on Futurism. The effect is almost, but not quite, that of reading two monographs bound into one book. Certainly Kozloff wants the reader to think of the two movements as contemporaneous, parallel phenomena, and in the Futurist half of his book he refers occasionally to points made in the Cubist half, but basically Kozloff would have us regard Cubism and Futurism as separate, nearly simultaneous expressions of early twentieth century efforts to make art bear the weight of new and difficult approaches to perception.

Among the antecedents of Cubism, Kozloff finds most instructive the efforts of Cézanne to "graph the very fluctuations of seeing." For, it is the ability to generate constantly new possibilities for seeing that Kozloff credits to Cubism, and he makes the point convincing through detailed discussions of Cézanne, Picasso and Braque. Intricate and occasionally obscured by jargon from communication theory and linguistics (such terms as information, noise, energy, language, grammar, syntax, sign and code crop up here and there), Kozloff's presentation, on the whole, is lively, provocative and true to his stated desire of recreating "some of the initial shock perpetuated by modern art" while, at the same time, offering insights drawn from a learned, critical response.

In his most interesting chapter, "Cubism and the Human Comedy" (previously published in *Art News*), Kozloff takes up the Cubists' fragmentation and dislocation of the human form. In place of the purely formal approach usually made to this aspect of Cubism, Kozloff offers an incisive moral interpretation. With *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* as his stepping off point, Kozloff comments on the presentation of the female nude as courtesan and prostitute in nineteenth and twentieth century painting, and goes on to speculate how Cubism can be seen as a reaction to the dehumanization and mechanization of human beings in modern times.

Nothing quite as complex or far-reaching appears in the second half of the book, but throughout the chapters on Futurism one finds excellent analyses of devices and techniques the Futurists called upon to, as Kozloff puts it, "catch perception on the wing." Kozloff shows convincingly that while both Cubists and Futurists "were convinced of the essential fluidity and relativity of perception," the consequences for their pictures were quite different. "For Picasso and Braque," he writes, "these qualities emerged in the process of manipulating half-standardized lines, shadows, and shapes, into wholes made up of embroidered hesitation. In Futurism, on the contrary, matter and movement perceived are an intrinsic and immediate product of bodily experience, which has to be translated with fresh pictorial equivalents every time a new phenomenon is studied."

Taking collage as one example, Kozloff shows that the Cubist tendency was to consolidate work-over, play-with and, as it were, codify the possibilities offered by that mixed media form, whereas for the Futurists "the collage mode was a kind of promiscuous 'carrying on,' accountable only, but crucially, to their sense of formal rightness. To the Futurists, though, each admixture of new materials theoretically affirmed a particular movement of perception but had *no inherent structural role*" (Kozloff's emphasis). The overall implications of Kozloff's study would lead one to make the same distinctions between Cubist and Futurist work generally.

Therein lies, perhaps, the explanation for the greater influence and long-range appeal of Cubism. But it is to Kozloff's credit that unlike most commentators on early twentieth century art, he does not elevate Cubism at the expense of Futurism. He prefers a strategy of controlled parallelism, which allows him "to restore to its true, two-track scope the continuous network of innovations that could not have been wrought by Cubism alone." To the degree that those innovations can be found in the finished work of a few artists, Kozloff's difficult task is admirably accomplished. But these particular works hover as still points of reference above a more intricate and shifting network of energies and intentions, which, in spite of Kozloff's efforts, remain as intriguing and mysterious as ever.

William C. Wees

McGill University

Animate Illusions: Explorations of Narrative Structure by Harold Toliver. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974, Pp. ix + 412. $10.00.

Animate Illusions is a massive, erudite and richly informative excursion into twentieth century narrative theory. Presenting truly helpful analyses of older positions and buttressing his own theoretical views with explication upon explication of primary literature, Toliver writes throughout under the guidance of a single unifying design which emerges as a whole at points throughout the text:

> The fictionalist is . . . committed to the assimilation of an action into the realm of symbolic significance or poetics . . . [In his use of them, events] belong to him and not to history; they exist and are knowable only in

> his witnessing of them, and he need not release them until he has infused them . . . with the preservative of a systematic meaning. At that decisive step he also plunges the witnessing intelligence into the "pathos" of animate illusions. (pp. 104-105)

The Russian Formalists saw *plot* as "defamiliarized" *story*, as if the selection of events in organizing a chronological story were somehow a transparent, anaesthetic process; this erroneous assumption flawed their formulation, though the notion of defamiliarization remains one of the most useful and suggestive of modern critical categories. Toliver fights the good fight, and to similar suggestive effect, by keeping before modern readers the notions that the world is chaotic while art is not; that events are not only as we see them; that all fictional meaning is tainted by some pathetic fallacy; that all art is illusion. But in suggesting that we can sometimes notice events *without* apprehending them as specifically significant, Toliver flaws his thesis through assuming the transparency of our faculties of perception, ignoring the insights of Gestalt psychology and modern anthropology. As Edmund Carpenter says, "History is a book," not direct experience.

Animate Illusions is divided into four sequential sections. "Linear Logic" develops historically the many arguments from Plato to Joseph Frank concerning the temporality of narrative and resists such modern spatialists as Sharon Spencer (*Space, Time, and Structure in the Modern Novel*) by reminding us clearly that

> Verbal coherence is profoundly temporal; the psychology of reading and listening is based on successiveness and rhythm . . . All rearrangements of narrative chronology depend upon chronology for their effects. (p. 11)

This is a terribly important assertion because it prevents our confusing our "static memory" (Bachelard) of a work with the temporally extended experience of that work. However, Toliver makes not only this general warning, but also concludes that since events in history keep right on happening while in fictions they have beginnings middles, and ends, organic shaping of temporal succession is "the major structural distinction between fiction and historiography." (p. 87) This may seem so in theory but in practice the Athenian Thucydides ended *The Peloponnesian Wars* with Athens a shambles, thus making his history fulfill the structure of classical Greek tragedy: this despite the fact that he wrote after Athens had recovered from its setbacks and conquered Sparta entirely. Toliver's theoretical point is quite well taken, and often well demonstrated; but some conclusions of theory do not stand up against practice.

This argumentative flaw does not, however, invalidate the useful distinctions Toliver makes in "Modes and Methods" in order to better understand the elements of the presumably isolated category of fiction. "Along similar structural grounds," (p. 107) Toliver divides the *cinematic* mode (narration by pictures) (p. 189), from the *lyric* mode (or sometimes *melodic*, narration retarded by "verse measure" and "the rhythm of formal recurrence"), and from the *dramatic* mode (narration pulled forward by "the urge of expectations") (p. 170). These modes, of course, mix all the time in actual works and the analysis of this mixing, for instance in explicating the felt rhythm of *Robinson Crusoe*,

is often brilliant. Though the concept of mixable modes is certainly useful and provocative, flaws emerge again at some of the boundaries between theory and practice. Toliver asserts, for instance, on the basis of his isolation of modes appropriate to different genres that "For no novelist . . . [is] Pope's apocalyptic satire an acceptable way of thinking about a story line." (p. 174) To my mind, Zamiatin's *We*, in which the super-state wins by discovering an operation for "the surgical removal of fancy," is a witty, satiric commentary on current social trends that ends, the narrator-rebel mentally castrated, with precisely the feeling of "the uncreating word" that "lets the curtain fall; /And universal Darkness buries All." Toliver is not wrong in his analyses of modes; it's just that he's not quite as right as he might think.

Perhaps the most unalloyedly successful section of the book is "Suffered Knowledge" in which with consummate sensitivity based on much hard reading, especially of Henry James, Toliver takes up Dewey's point that "rhythm is one of the inherent structures that art and experience have in common." (p. 226) He argues that our reading experience is structured by the text through time, and that this self-referential experience, if it fits our own sense of our suffered experience of events in life, will seem "real," even if the work is fable, parable, or fairy tale. Although Toliver does not explore the mechanism by which "minimal segments" (p. 254) of narrative—or events in life for that matter—seem to achieve separable meaningful identity, it is nonetheless clear that one does feel the unity of narrative segments both large and small, that events in life do have meanings, and that the concept of structural analogy greatly illuminates the reading process. Where the argument proceeds with closest attention to literary practice, it gives the most potent force to literary theory.

Thus, "Fictional Signs," which argues that symbols organize our responses, is successful in its practical criticism, especially in explicating the importance of city settings in narrative, but is least successful in trying to gloss over the notion of symbol as, tautologically, that which organizes our responses. Surely there are differences between the impact of style and the impact of plot, between the apprehension of the end of the story and the apprehension of the hero's death, no matter how closely these may be related.

Toliver chooses Wallace Stegner's *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier* as his most extended example (20 pages) because it presents an interesting inclusion of a fictional *rite de passage* (a story called "Genesis") within a larger historical and autobiographical framework that ostensibly seeks to make the reader understand the actuality of Whitemud, Saskatchewan. Toliver is convinced that Stegner's history is "real" because it is "impinged upon" by external events; in contrast, he feels that "it is the privilege of fiction to come to . . . conclusions in theme, image, and plot." (p. 89) Thus, the historic framework surrounding Rusty's personal ordeal in "Genesis" is confirmed by the presumably unique—and therefore historical—actualities of the blizzard-ridden winter of 1906-07, which Stegner tells us actually happened and which Toliver accepts as "an unprecedented series of absurdities." (p. 88) But like Swiss writer Peter Bischel's Spaniards in "There Is No Such Place As America," the average reader has no way to confirm the historicity of the blizzard. One sees this epistemological difficulty in one of R. D. Laing's "Knots":

> Jill believes Jack.
> She now thinks she sees what Jack thinks Jack sees and that Jack sees it too.
> They may now both be completely wrong.

A closer examination of *Wolf Willow* shows it to have all the structural attributes of fiction. The opening section, "The Question Mark in the Circle," presents man the interrogation point as anomalous in the wide, flat expanse of the Canadian plain. Toliver notes this and notes how in the final section, "The Making of Paths," man is conquered by the environment, "impinged upon," and forced out, leaving only the footpaths of his transit. Presumably despite the Jack London-esque "Genesis" story in the middle, this conquest of man by environment demonstrates that *Wolf Willow* is structurally a history. But note the artistic movement here. Stegner takes us first to a land without people. Question marks, instantaneous, vertical assertions of language, the impositions of categories (and land surveys) try to tame the plain. After the ordeal of man against the elements in the winter of 1906-07, which is narrated in the middle of the book, people wear paths into the landscape, enduring, horizontal records of human action. Yet larger than men and encompassing this narrative movement is the image of the plain, unknown before the book picks up its story, unhuman when the book ends, the paths going back to grass.

In *As I Lay Dying*, presumably a work of fiction, the central action is man's fight against the elements. Surely the series of flood, fire, and death that Faulkner submits the Bundren family to is "an unprecedented series of absurdities." Philosophically, the central notion of the book is Addie's organizing statement.

> I would think how words go straight up in a thin line, quick and harmless, and how terribly doing goes along the earth, clinging to it, so that after a while the two lines are too far apart for the same person to straddle from one to the other . . . ,

What really makes *Wolf Willow* one kind of writing and *As I Lay Dying* another?

Faulkner lets us know that his plot is designedly symbolic; Stegner asserts that his events are fortuitously meaningful. Fiction asks for attention; history asks for belief. Belief—not merely the suspension of disbelief—comes not on the grounds of "narrative structure" but on the grounds of experience: a) *Wolf Willow* has the trappings of specific truth, maps as end papers, references to Custer and the Hudson's Bay Company and other "historical" elements that the reader cannot confirm but has agreed—with the rest of readers through shared experience—to accept as "true"; b) *Wolf Willow* has nothing in it either asserted to be untrue or generally known to be untrue. We see a narrative as history when neither the voice of the narrator nor the demands of experience disconfirms the general, theoretical assertion made through symbolic structure.

Structural phenomena thus account for much in our process of reading, and Harold Toliver performs true service in forcing us to see the linearity of narrative structure, the temporal impact and mixing of modes, the epistemological basis of our feelings of narrative rightness, and the temporally structured functioning of units of narrative meaning. But the service is incomplete unless one sees also the importance of experience. Literature is, after all, practice. Toliver

provides us with a useful theory that drives us back to a fresh consideration of that practice time and again. This makes *Animate Illusions*, though it has its weaknesses, a clearly valuable book.

ERIC S. RABKIN

University of Michigan

Popcorn Venus by Marjorie Rosen. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973. 380 pages. $9.95.

Marjorie Rosen's delightful and interesting book, *Popcorn Venus*, traces the history of women in film to reveal how art and life have interacted. The title comes from her statement in the preface that the "Cinema Woman is a Popcorn Venus, a delectable but insubstantial hybrid of cultural distortions." And so her prose continues throughout the book, often pointed but occasionally lapsing into punny cuteness as in the title for Section II about the twenties: "Wet Dreams in a Dry Land."

Undoubtedly Ms. Rosen, who holds a master's degree in film from New York University, was partially inspiried by the resurgence of feminism, so it is to her credit that she uses the book to inform rather than to proselytize. However, her politics are always apparent, and occasionally she has interpreted films with the preconceived notion that women have been put on the screen simply to be put down. For example, in reviewing three films which portray emotionally disturbed women, Rosen disregards the films' larger meanings to criticize the weak and ineffectual role each female character is shown to assume in life.

She begins, chronologically, with "The Snake Pit" (1947), starring Olivia de Haviland as a psychotic who reaches an understanding of herself and her past through the competent guidance of a male psychiatrist. As Ms. Rosen herself acknowledges: ". . . the film reputedly helped institute reforms in asylums which . . . did indeed treat their patients as both inmates and animals." That the patient was a woman and her psychiatrist a man is simply a case of art reflecting life. The majority of mental patients *are* women, and the vast majority of physicians in any specialty are men. Since the situation presented in "The Snake Pit" corresponded with reality as perceived by the audience, it was, therefore, more likely to act as a catalyst for reform. Is it not asking too much of Hollywood in the forties to reveal what is only now being suggested by some—that women are more likely to be driven mad by a sexist society which allows men a greater diversity of life experiences? Curiously, Ms. Rosen fails to comment on "The Three Faces of Eve," based on an actual case of multiple personality in a woman.

She does, however, discuss "Come Back Little Sheba" (1952) and "Splendor in the Grass" (1961), two stories by playwright William Inge. Perhaps "discuss" is too strong a word; actually Ms. Rosen dismisses the former as being a "how-to" movie for catching and keeping a man. "Shirley Booth is a puffy-frump wife whose sloppiness sends her youthful, muscular husband Burt Lancaster to other women." She is also insecure and immature which accounts for her physical appearance, but Rosen ignores that.

We, the audience, may know that Lancaster is a handsome, virile man; in the movie, he appears as a graying, middle-aged alcoholic whose own instability

resulted from broken dreams. Had he not impregnated Booth when they were eighteen, he might have been a physician instead of a chiropractor. Had her baby not died because of their innocent, bungling effort to conceal the disgrace by engaging a midwife, she might have found fulfillment in the motherhood forever denied her. Both husband and wife have been cheated by society's code of conduct, and trying to make the best of a marriage neither deserves has driven them to a restrained madness. That was one of the few instances in which a fifties' film attempted to portray reality, and it is not the fault of the film if, as Rosen implies, the audience cannot separate the actors from their previous roles.

With "Splendor in the Grass," Rosen reduces the situation of teen-aged lovers scarred by small town denial of sexuality to the Doris Day formula level of "will she or won't she" (share his bed). That is more unfortunate than her mishandling of the two previous films because here Natalie Wood, though suffering a nervous breakdown, triumphs as a person at film's end. Both she and the boy suffered, but while he opted for the easy solution of security with a lower class wife and a broken-down farm, Wood endures collapse only to recover and move beyond the confines of the town and its provincial minds. When Rosen finally finds a film with woman as winner, her focus is somewhere else.

One reason these films have suffered from the author's commentary is that they have been crowded together with too many others in the second half of the book. Furthermore, somewhere along the way, she lost sight of her too ambitious sub-title, "Women, Movies and the American Dream." Though continuing to deal with women and movies, particularly with women *in* movies, she has ceased to mention the American Dream.

What is the "Dream"? Earlier, she implied that it was the Horatio Alger myth, the get-rich-quick success story. Another implication is that the myth was created by and for men. She argues that movies have consistently participated in a conspiracy to thwart female ambitions with the exception of some forties' films which glorified Rosie the Riveter to aid the war effort. But Rosen refrains from stating any of these ideas very directly, leaving the reader frustrated with the closing statement of the final chapter: "It is time to start utilizing feminine resources. And reinterpreting the American Dream." Reinterpretation demands prior intrpretation, not to be found here.

Misreading of some film material and a failure to define terms are serious faults, but *Popcorn Venus* has many strengths in addition to its aforementioned style. The early chapters are particularly successful in correlating the roles women portrayed on the screen with the positions women were taking in life. Rosen shows that film as a mirror of society has tended to distort, rather than reflect, life.

While women in increasing numbers were postponing marriage and motherhood to pursue twenties' career objectives, films featured Mary Pickford and others as either the helpless child-women of Victorian myth or the evil temptresses (vamps) of men's daydreams and, perhaps, women's erotic fantasies. Neither, of course, gave a three-dimensional image of the sex. When the Depression threw thousands of women out of work, Hollywood responded to life by filming an incredible number of stories about career girls, particularly reporters and chorines. The vamp was updated into Mae West's ludicrous burlesque of femininity and Bette Davis' all-American bitch. But Ms. Rosen is forced to admit that Davis'

box-office success meant "she must have been doing something the public wanted." Still, the question Rosen asks, but does not answer, is the extent to which Holloywood told the public what it should want.

The Pickford image was also restyled in the thirties, only this time with a real little girl, Shirley Temple. Rosen makes a pointed observation in her discussion of Temple, Jane Withers and the teen-aged Judy Garland who were all determined and, at times, aggressive in their screen roles. She contrasts this moppet trio with the child star, Mickey Rooney, to show that Mickey was aggressive in his own behalf while the girls assumed the "feminine" role of always helping others. Adult women who, like Rooney, worked for their own aims were viewed as threats to a male-dominated and oriented society and were likely to become the objects of audience hatred as Davis and Barbara Stanwyck so often were.

In the forties, we finally saw strong, mature women of "Mrs. Miniver" calibre who, with the men at war, corresponded with the working women of the film audience. There were, in addition, more roles allotted to women in films. As Rosen notes, this was due in part to the fact that many male stars were in the service. But, at war's end, films which dealt with the problems of post-war readjustment tended to explore the question from a man's point of view, ignoring the women whose jobs were being taken away and who, in many cases, were admitting shell-shocked or mutilated "strangers" into their homes.

Next came the "deadly limbo of fifties' women's films" which encouraged early marriage and numbers of children as substitutes for work women weren't allowed. As in the Depression, the Eisenhower years provided too few jobs for too many men, and the movies presented a host of blonde sex goddesses for bored housewives to emulate. Even in their private lives, actresses like Debbie Reynolds continued to reinforce the myth that husband and chlidren were the most important goals in life. And how many people still today believe that Marilyn Monroe would be alive had she been able to give Arthur Miller a child? What he gave her was one of the few roles (in "The Misfits") which enabled her to evade the "type" Hollywood had assigned her. It was her mindless screen roles, Rosen suggests, as well as her less-than-private life which haunted the woman.

Marjorie Rosen's book declines in interest and validity when she arrives at the last decade. It is one she could hardly omit, yet perhaps should have since it is too near the present to be analyzed with much objectivity. The last chapters also suffer from the inclusion of a great deal of material about pop culture in general, especially about the rock music scene.

Popcorn Venus is a readable, generally informative book on a neglected aspect of American film history. Its basic weakness is that it, like the subject, is a hybrid, being at once a volume of often flippant film criticism as well as an attempt at social history and the editorial essay. Secondly, Ms. Rosen should have concluded whether American films are meant to be art or entertainment, a crucial distinction if one is to argue that film should elevate, rather than reflect, popular taste. Her interchangeable use throughout of the words "film" and "movie" reveals the ambiguity she obviously sees. Therefore, while the book entertains, it only occasionaly enlightens and, in the end, one is left with an effect similar to the aftertaste of popcorn, a confection filling but ultimately unsatisfying.

Marilyn Mitchell

Wayne State University