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## Book Review

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*Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution* by Tom Furniss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. xiv + 306. \$59.95.

*Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art* edited by Paul Mattick, Jr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. vii + 256. \$49.95.

At one point in the introductory essay in which Paul Mattick, Jr. describes the essays in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, he identifies the central view that unites the several contributors to the volume. "The authors," he writes, "work with a variety of analytic and historical methods . . . but all rest on the conviction that aesthetic ideas, of the present as well as the past, can be fully understood when seen not only in relation to intellectual and other social contexts but as themselves constructed in history" (3). This is a promising enough beginning, particularly insofar as it opens on a number of views that have come to dominate discussions of aesthetics in the last quarter century. For Mattick's affirmation of the importance of history echoes the influential view that aesthetics and history have been, until recently, treated as if they were opposed to one another. Whether aesthetics has been seen as an effort to talk about the "timeless" (what is ahistorical by virtue of persisting throughout history) or whether it has been seen as an effort to deny the significance of one's material circumstances, it has, almost invariably, been described as in some kind of opposition to history.

Mattick operates under the assumption that the opposition—or, more precisely, the antagonism—between aesthetics and history represents an historical deficiency in aesthetics (as in philosophy generally), and his introduction presents various strategies for dosing aesthetics accordingly. The first of these is the injunction to consider that history itself has changed: "only during the last several hundred years" has "the idea gained ground that history is marked by discontinuities as well as continuities" (1). For Mattick, this seems to mean that the appearance of the idea of discontinuity is, in the first place, itself an historical phenomenon and, in the second, a repudiation of the notion that there are fixed sets of arguments and alternatives—"a cycling through a set of constant alternatives" (1). Yet after having introduced these plausible views, he proceeds to unpack them in less plausible ways. For instance, repudiating cycles is for him tantamount to discarding the project of constructing intellectual equivalences (between the savage and the civilized, as in Levi-Strauss's work; between the classical and the modern, as in Bernard Williams's *Shame and Necessity*, in which Williams renewed the claim of structuralist anthropology to discovery justifiable and recognizable ethical views rather than the mere otherness of superstition in earlier cultures).

The historicity of the idea of discontinuity is easy enough for Mattick to establish; it came into being with the "social transformation" effected by "the development of the capitalist mode of production" (1). What is somewhat more difficult to see is why the fact that history can come to be perceived as involving discontinuity—that is, change—should come to mean that the notion of history ought to be seen to be identical only with the notion of discontinuity. Yet it turns out that the emergence of the idea of discontinuity in history both makes the idea of a world-historical survey of aesthetics absurd,

in Mattick's view, and raises a question about whether he would take it to be possible actually to write a history.

From the standpoint of his insistence upon historical discontinuity, he can point to a fine irony in the surveys that we have taken to be histories of aesthetics: that modern aestheticians discover "the beginning of their discipline in the mid-1700s" but that they "almost invariably" accompany that recognition with "the identification of an earlier origin in classical Greece" (3). For Mattick such a move involves a conspicuous lack of self-consciousness, an inability, in the moment one is announcing the sempiternal continuity of aesthetics, to keep track of the fact that one had, only a moment before, announced its emergence. He instances, in support of his view that one should not press transhistorical resemblances too hard, Marx's objection to conflating similarity of materials and means of labor with similarity of conceptions. Marx, ridiculing political economists who imagine that "the Kirghiz who cuts down rushes with a knife he has stolen from a Russian so as to weave them together to make a canoe is just as true a capitalist as Herr von Rothschild," had crowed that he "could prove with equal facility that the Greeks and Romans celebrated communion because they drank wine and ate bread, and that the Turks sprinkle themselves daily with holy water like Catholics because they wash themselves daily" (8). Yet while Marx seems primarily to be attacking vulgar materialism (in the form of the view that apparently similar materials and means of labor must involve similar intentions), Mattick seems to press the position rather harder, as if to suggest that it would be wrong for a native speaker of any language, for instance, to reclassify his earlier speech as a series of instances of prose.

His critique of the "eighteenth-century reclassification of the activities and objects that now form the fine arts" thus amounts to a rejection of the notion that there are certain basic questions about fictitious representation that now look like a kind of pre-history of aesthetics as we have come to know it since the eighteenth century. The double move of saying that people came to discuss aesthetics in the eighteenth century and that Plato, for instance, had posed substantial questions about the relationship between fictions and reason must come, for him, to look like a basic mistake. It seems to emphasize the truth of issues at the expense of the particular means that get at and constitute that truth (as if there were an aesthetic "character previously obscured" [6]); and properly historical consciousness, he argues, ought to be the repudiation of all such efforts at equivalence.

Yet if he first suggested that it was simply mistaken to act as if Plato were really talking about the same things as Addison, he begins to waffle on this issue. If twentieth-century commentators make this mistake, they are, as he recognizes very clearly, at least authorized by example. The history of aesthetics itself—not merely for modern aestheticians talking about the history of their field but also for the eighteenth-century writers on art and beauty whom we are historicizing—continually belies a basic commitment to the similarity or continuity of their discussion to that of the ancients. As Mattick appreciates, they saw themselves as "continuing a form of discourse practiced by the ancients, as evidenced in their constant reference to the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Cicero, Quintilian, Pliny, and the supposed Longinus" (6). And it is this belief that obviously complicates what had, a moment

ago, seemed to be the patent absurdity of making things mean in the present by alienating them from their historical circumstances.

There is, of course, the larger question of whether and why we should want history at all if it never seemed recognizable as anything that might resemble part of our own experience. But leaving that question aside, there is the rather simpler matter of explicating the passage from Marx that Mattick instances. While Mattick presents Marx as saying that cross-cultural and transhistorical generalizations are absurd, it would appear that Marx's claim is rather less sweeping. If Turks don't become Catholics by washing themselves, his point is surely that physical resemblance between two actions is less important than the kinds of intention one could bring to it. No Turk at his toilet is, on Marx's account, likely to be, say, a leading candidate to become pope, because neither he nor anyone else would see his washing himself as involving the capacity for any of the other actions that would make him a contender for that office. But, unless the brevity of an introduction misrepresents his position entirely, Mattick inclines towards disrupting not only the resemblance between bathing Turks and self-anointing Catholics but also the resemblance between early and late Catholics, who, though separated from one another by a great deal, are presumably sometimes united in their ways of deploying water.

The difficulty is not in Mattick's primary aim, which is the admirable one of eschewing presentist and progressivist accounts of history, but rather in his sense of how—and how thoroughly—one must react against the temptations against presentism and progressivism. On the one hand, it is very easy to imagine that, if the notion of a publicity effect means anything, it crucially applies to the relationship between the present and the past, and to the fact that what feels like present actuality renews its recommendations much more readily than any represented past can do. Yet because Mattick is so alert to the mistakenness of privileging our own ways of constructing things now, he imagines that he needs to find a way of equalizing the competition between the past and the present and must therefore level the playing field by emphasizing discourse (as opposed to "a focus on self-conscious theory") (12). Rejecting Foucault's account of "discursive formations" because "neither he nor anyone else has actually tried to define the set of rules required to specify such a formation for any cognitive domain" (11), Mattick puts forward in preference J. G. A. Pocock's account, which represents discourse less as self-conscious theory than as "'the great variety of things that could be said or seen to have been said, and upon the diversity of linguistic contexts that went to determine what could be said but were at the same time acted upon by what was said'" (12). Except for its restriction to the written word, Pocock's account of discourse may sound suspiciously akin to Foucault's, in that both are committed to suggesting the way in which representations are not simply assertions of meaning but recommendations as well (and in that both have been taken as suggesting that there is a simple determinism at work in the linguistic and social forms of an age). And it is that aspect of the notion of discourse—its attention to the fact that every statement or theme or question also lays itself down as a partial context for subsequent statements, themes, and questions—that we can see Foucault getting at when he is concerned with the significance of architecture and a

variety of word-based and non-word-based technologies that influence behavior, or that we can see Pocock reaching for when he is concerned with how "each language context betokens a political, social, or historical context within which it is itself situated . . . [and how] each language to some degree selects and prescribes the context within which it is to be recognized'" (12).

For Mattick, discourse seems particularly important for suggesting an historical record that is describable not simply as the record of individual views ("a focus on self-conscious theory" [12]) nor as an expression of what Hazlitt called the spirit of the age. That is, discourse, on the account implicit here, seems to revolve around the ways in which "a variety of contexts" may influence one another, or, as Mattick puts it, are "capable both of cooperating and of interfering with each other in various ways" (12). The question of how one recognizes a context (a question that had appeared to have a certain urgency in relation to Foucault) thus does not so much get answered as resolved into a linguistic materialism that is a sophisticated variant on the crude materialism that Marx had lampooned in portraying the absurdity of taking a washing Turk for a self-anointing Christian. And if Mattick had seemed to view a text as importantly bound up with context, he drops that issue to discuss deviations from this inchoate notion; he moves on to describe both "textual migrations" (13), movements in which texts leave the local contexts in which they arose and transport themselves to others (the kind of thing that once occupied influence studies and publication histories), and what we might call "contextual migrations," movements in which "picturesque travel accounts," for example, "are linked with Sir Joshua Reynolds's Academy lectures, Locke's theory of property, and Smith's moral theory" (as in Elizabeth Bohls' essay in the volume [12]).

If the particularity of context once seemed like the justification for an historicism that would be the antidote to presentism, that is, textual migration and contextual migration seem instead to argue the case for a principled alienation. In other words, the notion of context ceases to involve the project of narrowing the field of interpretative probabilities to what someone like Marx's Turk probably does and does not mean with his washing; it is instead an expansive notion in which the association between one context and another may clearly exceed what any individual speaker was capable of meaning by it.

The discursive solution thus seems like a peculiar antidote to the hazards of presentism, in as much as it would appear to perform the same job of alienation that presentism does; and in fact the introduction proceeds to return to a version of the presentism that it had eschewed. For the present, it emerges, has derived from history all along: "we stand as present-day commentators on the past *within* a discourse formed in art by elements of that past, and to which we must therefore take a reflexive and critical stance" (15). Moreover, he claims, "the discourse studied here is one in which the writers of these essays are implicated" (15). The "reflexive and critical stance" therefore comes to lie in the recognition that there is no "reflexive and critical stance" available, since present discourses depend upon past discourses—indeed, are increasingly indistinguishable from past discourses. The Introduction comes around, in other words, to rejecting the view that

the past is continuous with the present by affirming that the present is continuous with the past.

Reassuring as it may be to hear that there is "no conflict in principle between historical accuracy and relevance to current social and so intellectual concerns" (16), there is something puzzling as well in this formulation. For if the project of the volume seemed initially to involve showing how "art as we know it—the system of 'fine arts'—is largely peculiar to modern society," that project seemed to suggest that real historical accuracy would eliminate such relevance; if writers in the historical past didn't mean the same thing we mean by similar activities, how can an historical account that exposes that difference in meaning imagine that those different meanings are relevant to our views? The problem of relevance has, I suspect, surfaced in large measure because the history that was supposed to rescue us from aestheticism has come to sound increasingly similar to it. The quandary is this: Bourdieu's account of aesthetics as "an ethos of elective distance from the necessities of the natural and social world" informs several of the essays included here; that account carries with it a critique of high formalism and aesthetics that sees them as enacting and endorsing the notion of elective distance, the proposition that natural and social conditions fall with varying degrees of force on various different people and that modern aesthetic experience is one way of continuing that differential impact; and yet the historical account that recognized the full extent of the difference between earlier accounts and our own would itself clearly enact elective distance just as forcibly. The difference between distance by way of imagination and distance by way of history does not, that is, seem particularly compelling.

I have dwelt this long upon Mattick's brief introduction, first, because the timeliness of the volume revolves around the sense of urgency that has recently attached to historicizing work and, second, because I think that we need better reasons for that urgency than the appeal to the reality of the discourse (13) and to the relevance of historical accuracy. Indeed, the volume itself presents essays with a variety of kinds of implicit argument for the relevance of history. Jeffrey Barnouw's "The beginnings of 'aesthetics' and the Leibnizian conception of sensation" offers an account of Leibniz's discussion of subliminal or marginal awareness as a "confused" mode of representation and suggests the work it did as a context for the writing of Baumgarten and other participants in eighteenth-century aesthetic discussions; the clear implication of his practice is that an historical account helps us to understand the writings of early aestheticians better than we could by simply reading off the words on the page. And while Barnouw confines his discussions to the question of how Leibniz and his arguments might have served as a recommendation to other writers, other contributors—notably Bohls, Shusterman, Mattick, and Woodmansee—emphasize the uses of art to express social and economic motives and see historical research as partially aimed at countering the recommendations that are plausibly involved in any description of action. If Woodmansee, for example, would emphasize that Addison was addressing bankers looking to fill their new-found leisure, a principal stress in her discussion falls on the notion that we should *not* do as they do, should not take their actions and the objects and texts that represent them as precedents for our own.

Tom Furniss's *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution*, like *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, examines the interconnections between aesthetics and history, or aesthetics and politics. Furniss offers a detailed account of Burke through readings of *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) that reach well beyond those texts to a variety of writings by Burke's contemporaries. He is, in particular, preoccupied with a problem that has long troubled commentators on Burke—that the political positions that Burke sketches in his primarily aesthetic writing seem to contradict those of his later political writing. This contradiction has produced a variety of explanations, including Isaac Kramnick's account of Burke's conflicted "bourgeois identity" and C. B. Macpherson's argument that there was no real contradiction because the traditional order was already capitalist. Furniss's own interest, however, is to "move away from such author-centred models of reading and textual production in order to see Burke's texts as a weave of discourses which intersect with a range of interrelated writings in the eighteenth century" (7).

Furniss treats a number of subjects that have figured prominently in Burke scholarship in recent years—Burke's account of the sublime, his view of language, the account of gender that emerges from his work, and his views of the place of custom and revolution, and he does so with assurance and intelligence. Indeed, his book stands as eloquent testimony to the usefulness that deconstructive criticism can have for an intelligent critic and to the aptness of the fit between some deconstructive concerns and Burke's own commitments. Although *Burke's Aesthetic Ideology* is shaped in part by exclusions that many historians will doubtless regret, Furniss's intense readings of the *Enquiry* and the *Reflections* attempt to emphasize the concerns that bind these texts to one another. (However much is added by the discussions of Richard Price, Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft and others, the focus on these two key Burke texts is crucial to the organization of the book.) A standard historical overview might well talk about Burke's personal views at the various stages of his life, might simply discuss the changes in his views over the more than thirty years that separates the two works, or might even suggest that, being about two very different subjects, the two were largely unrelated. Furniss, however, is interested (in a perfectly reasonable version of deconstructive practice) in stressing the two texts' relationship to one another, because that gives him a way of talking about how the two texts constitute between them something like a sustained irony, in which the same words now seem to be used for very different effect from that of their first occurrence. In its less compelling version, this amounts to noting a resemblance between terms that have had drastically different valences attached to them: thus, he argues that "the sublime seems potentially reactionary and revolutionary *at one and the same time*" (120). This discovery may seem less surprising than predictable (in so far as it is an obvious byproduct of a critical practice that both aligns dissimilar texts to emphasize their similarity and also identifies the dissimilarities in apparent resemblance). In its more compelling version, however, Furniss's book provides a enormously acute—and indispensable—insight into Burke and his achievement. For what Furniss has accomplished

is to present the most sustained account I know of Burke's importance as an early analyst and practitioner of the art of recommendation and of its dual affinities with aesthetics and politics.

*The Johns Hopkins University*

Frances Ferguson

*History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature*, edited by Beth Fowkes Tobin. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994. Pp. vii + 309. \$50.00.

*Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers* by Claudia N. Thomas. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994. Pp. xii + 309. \$39.95.

In the past ten or fifteen years, the study of eighteenth-century British literature and culture has been invigorated by a new attention to the relation between gender roles and cultural authority; both of the books under consideration make valuable contributions to this trend in criticism, albeit in different ways. The majority of the essays in the collection edited by Beth Fowkes Tobin clearly see themselves as pursuing the fruitful line of inquiry into the domestic sphere initiated by the literary critics Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey and the historians Catherine Hall and Lenore Davidoff; they are concerned with evaluating the rise of women's moral authority during the eighteenth century, and with the growing importance of private, affective relationships for men and women alike. Methodologically, the essays in the Tobin volume take the inclusion of "History" in its title seriously; they by no means confine themselves to the analysis of literary texts. In contrast, Claudia Thomas's study of women writers' responses to Pope restricts its focus to female engagement with published literature. Like many of the essays in the Tobin collection, it is interested in disproving the notion that women in eighteenth-century Britain were the passive victims of patriarchal authority; however, it refutes this notion not through reference to the other forms of cultural authority women might exert, but through detailed analysis of the kinds of critical acuity women readers and writers brought to bear on the documents of male-dominated literary culture available to them.

According to Beth Fowkes Tobin's introduction, *History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature* aims to contribute both to women's studies, and to the more general field of gender studies. Admirably, several of the essays do expand the rubric of gender studies to include the construction of masculinity during the period, including Tobin's own excellent study of Arthur Young's writings and the creation of the profession of estate manager, and Shawn Lisa Maurer's fascinating discussion of filial relations in early periodicals. The volume also argues against a feminist essentialism; instead it seeks to "encourage feminists to turn to history and culture in their analyses of literary texts" (1) and number of the essays inflect their discussions of gender roles with attention to pertinent social contexts. Susan Staves's article on "Fielding and the Comedy of Attempted Rape" continues her ground-breaking work on the imbrication of gender roles, legal concepts, and literary rep-



resentation; both Maurer's piece and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace's article on "The Body, Class, and Art in *Evelina* and Frances Burney's *Early Diaries*" delineate the complex ways that middle-class economic identity, artistic and literary culture, and gender roles interacted during this period; Kathryn Kirkpatrick's investigation of metaphors of property in conduct book literature provides another interesting discussion of the relationship between class identities and constructions of femininity.

On the whole, these essays seem more adept at discussing the intricacies of English domestic culture than they do at extending those analyses to the context of English colonialism and imperialism. Often, when they do look at the relation between literature and the international arena, they rely on generalizations, rather than producing the kind of historically nuanced readings for which the introduction seems to call. Diane Dugaw's article on Gay's sequel to the *Beggar's Opera*, *Polly*, for example, is useful for bringing this fascinating text to readers' attention, but relies heavily on an unexamined comparison between English woman and Caribbean slaves, claiming that the play is a "satire that exposes the European heroic ideal as an ethos of slavery: an enslaving gender ideology and an enslaving will to empire that mutually construct each other" (39). Similarly, Ruth Perry's provocative comparison of four mid-eighteenth-century utopian novels ends with the proposal that "where women's claims to the life of the mind are honored and encouraged . . . it signals a belief in human potential—across gender and across the social dimensions of race, class and nation as well" (176). While it seems certain that the status of white women in eighteenth-century England was in some relation to the status of cultural others, it may be too all-encompassing to see sexual and racial oppression as two homogeneous, mutually exclusive, and thus analogous categories; such claims tend to ignore the heterogeneity of both dynamics, caused by the presence of gender difference in the colonies, for instance, or by ethnic differences among British women. Joseph Lew's article on "*Mansfield Park* and the Dynamics of Slavery" is an insightful analysis of the relation between the use of patriarchal power in the colonies and in the domestic space, but even he relies on the tempting, but imprecise, analogy between white English women and slaves to ground his argument. Only Jill Campbell's article on Mary Wortley Montagu's descriptions of Turkey escapes from such generalizations, primarily because she discusses the interaction between two distinct sets of gender roles—English and Turkish—as well as examining the specificity of Lady Mary's responses to cultural differences.

Finally, it needs to be said of this collection that it has a quite specific idea of the dominant concerns of eighteenth-century England, particularly of the latter half of this period. These concerns include the reorganization of familial relationships, the structural importance of female propriety and moral authority to social organization, and the growth of evangelicalism as a source of feminine cultural power. While certainly not misplaced, a belief in the pre-eminence of these issues tends to produce an alternative canon of eighteenth-century texts, though I'm sure the contributors to this volume have nothing so prescriptive in mind. Yet the usual suspects are there: Sarah Scott, Fanny Burney, and two articles each on Hannah More and Jane Austen. Only two essays (on Gay and Montagu) treat subjects arguably not re-

lated to the construction of the middle classes. Thus, while the volume makes no claim to cover all the permutations of gender in eighteenth-century culture, it seems significant that its articles make no mention of writers of amatory fiction in the early eighteenth-century—Haywood, Behn, or Manley—the scandalous memoirists of mid-century—Charlotte Charke, among others—or the republican feminists of the later part of the century—Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, or Mary Hays. I mention this not as a criticism, but to point out its potential implications for literary periodization. If feminist literary historians see *Mansfield Park* (published 1814) as an eighteenth-century novel, but overlook novels such as *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (published 1796), which argue against the priority of home and family in women's lives, they may find they have renounced a male-dominated "Age of Johnson" only to find themselves constrained by the parameters of an "Age of Domesticity."

In contrast, Claudia Thomas's book covers one subject in considerable depth. This is an exhaustive, scrupulous investigation of the broad variety of women readers' responses to the work of Alexander Pope throughout the eighteenth century. She includes prose responses, as well as poetic ones, and writers who adopted Pope's formal qualities, along with writers who expanded on his thematic concerns. After compiling this evidence, Thomas powerfully and persuasively concludes that

Pope's eighteenth-century women readers suggest a model of fearless critical reading. Few of these women identified with Pope's constructions of femininity. Instead, women appropriated and revised Pope's images to suit their own contexts, whether more genteel, more devout, or more feminist. Current analysis implying that contemporary women were somehow victimized by Pope's gendered rhetoric should reconsider the critical acuity with which his female audience often read. (244)

Although one might say that Thomas thus side-steps the potentially powerful impact of Pope's misogyny on his male readers, she nevertheless makes a crucial feminist statement in emphasizing female intelligence and critical agency.

Thomas provides a number of reasons why Pope would be a central figure in the intellectual milieu of eighteenth-century women, both during his lifetime and after his death. Analyzing Pope's early translations, Thomas concludes that such work "sought and addressed women readers" (21), providing openings for them either to learn from his poetic technique, or to enter into dialogue with his opinions. Like Valerie Rumbold in *Women's Place in Pope's World* (1989), Thomas also points to Pope's own marginalization in English culture, by virtue of his class, religion and deformity, to explain why women readers who were his contemporaries might have found him a more accessible ally or opponent than other writers of the time. As Pope assumed a position of cultural authority later in the century, Thomas argues, women's references to his work also served to legitimate their own writing. Denied the education that allowed male writers to signal authority through classical allusions, women turned to Pope to supply the place of the ancients.

Thomas's work rests on her exceptional scholarly labor in tracing the exact

references to Pope's works in hundreds of relatively inaccessible texts by women writers. One unfortunate byproduct of this comprehensiveness is that, at times, it is difficult to follow the thread of the argument in the welter of citations Thomas supplies. This painstaking accumulation of detail, however, produces one of the major strengths of Thomas's book. She is able to show convincingly that women writers did not hold a unitary view of Pope or his work: indeed, they could not, since they were such a varied group themselves. Thus, Pope provided an attractive interlocuter for such aristocratic poets as Mary Wortley Montagu and Anne Finch for different reasons than those for which he proved a valuable model for the working-class poet Mary Leapor, or the crippled shopkeeper, Mary Chandler. This illuminating description of the way class and social context produced a variety of published female voices in eighteenth-century Britain makes Thomas's book an outstanding contribution to the project of historicization outlined by Tobin. Her attention to the public voices of women in the aristocracy and among the working classes also does the added work of showing that women's writing of the period was not completely circumscribed by domestic ideology.

*University of Colorado*

Charlotte Sussman

*Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* by Jon Mee. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. Pp. xvi + 251. \$58.50.

*Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* by E. P. Thompson. New York: The New Press, 1993. Pp. xxi + 234. \$30.00.

Traditional Blake studies have asked: was Blake a political radical or a mystic, a radical democrat or an elitist devotee of art and the imagination? For Mee and Thompson, Blake's radicalism is primary, the thing from which everything else derives. Following the example, to some extent, of David Erdman, whose *Prophet Against Empire* (1954; 3rd ed. 1977) influentially presented the case for the poetry's being understood in political terms and in relation to the political conflicts of Blake's own period, Mee and Thompson in their very different ways contribute to and make more complex the argument for a radical Blake. It seems that today these are somewhat old-fashioned concerns, as the relevance of historical context and the fact of Blake's radicalism have long been taken for granted. Moreover, the political/anti-political dichotomies that informed decades of Blake studies now seem not just less interesting but beside the point, as what makes Blake's writing most distinctive does not seem to be describable in terms of that dichotomy.

All too aware of his principal critical precursor, Mee in his introduction distinguishes his approach from that of Erdman. According to Mee, Erdman only illustrated the ways in which historical events are reflected in Blake's poetry; Mee, however, announces that he will deal more comprehensively with Blake's radical rhetoric, language, and poetic forms (1-2). That Erdman is as narrow and Mee as encompassing as the introduction declares is hardly

certain. Nevertheless, despite a few ill effects of the anxiety of influence, Mee makes some genuine contributions to Blake studies.

Although concentrating on the work of the 1790s (excluding, however, *The Four Zoas*), Mee also makes an argument for understanding the whole of Blake. His thesis is that Blake is representative of 1790s radicalism. Hardly idiosyncratic, as Blake's image has often been, Blake was a *bricoleur* who combined the two main radical ideologies of religious "enthusiasm" and Enlightenment rationalism. Blake's writing is "a variegated political discourse that was an eclectic combination of a variety of received repertoires" from these different traditions (4). Blake's belonging to a tradition of religious dissent is hardly a novel claim, of course, but the poetry's status as *bricolage* from two seemingly incompatible traditions is original, I believe. Some critics, such as Marilyn Butler, have stressed Blake's Enlightenment lineage, at least in the 1790s work, but Mee is making unusually strenuous claims for Blake's rationalism. Even if those claims cannot be proven satisfactorily, they force us to think in ways we might not have otherwise.

The first chapter is on popular religious "enthusiasm" and radical millenarianism, also the main focus of Thompson's book. Usefully describing the largely plebeian "prophetic" discourse of the 1790s, Mee provides a detailed context of religious rebellion within which Blake's own is coherent. Distinguishing between a "pre-millennialism" that entailed a violent intervention by Christ and a "post-millennialism" that was politically optimistic and gradualist, Mee persuasively situates Blake within the "unrespectable" radicalism of antinomians and messianic prophets. Stylistic qualities of Blake's writing—parallelism, use of parable, deliberate obscurity—Mee attributes to the prophetic tradition in its polite (Lowth) and unrespectable (Brothers) forms. Mee describes vividly the 1790s plebeian tradition of religious dissent at its most "enthusiastic" and subversive, discussing figures unfamiliar to most Romantics: Garnet Terry, John Wright, Samuel How, John Cooke, William Huntington, George Ribeau, and James Relly. The extent to which the seventeenth-century revolutionary Protestantism survived into the nineteenth century is surprising (and is something Thompson investigates as well). Blake's affinities with revolutionary Dissent have been noted often, for example rather extensively by Michael Ferber (*The Social Vision of William Blake*, 1985), but Mee shows precisely how lively and active such Dissenters were in Blake's own London. Mee could have done more with the Swedenborgians, about whom there has been considerable research already, and who were the only religious group that we know with certainty with whom Blake had some kind of relationship. Nevertheless, one can no longer ignore the energetic religious "enthusiasm" as an enabling context for Blake's own prophetic assertions. As we learn more about the 1790s, Blake comes to seem less idiosyncratic, more typical (at least in certain ways).

A few claims in the first chapter are not convincing. That J. S. Jordan, radical publisher of Paine, also published the antinomian Garnet Terry, is hardly a persuasive argument in itself for the compatibility between rationalist and religious dissent Mee wants to find. Joseph Johnson published both Godwin and Malthus's attack on Godwin in the 1790s. It is indisputable that in the 1790s (and later as well) political radicals were both religious and secular, even antireligious. Mee wants to insist there is something more than the ob-

vious diversity of political radicalism. Another dubious claim in the first chapter is that Blake's unpopularity was caused by his "enthusiastic" style (46). First, the enthusiastic style did not make the numerous other authors Mee cites unpopular; obviously, there was a considerable audience for this style of writing but those readers did not, for whatever reasons, favor Blake. Second, the issue of Blake's readability and accessibility to readers is more complex than just matters of ideology and politics (see Stephen Behrendt's recent book on Blake's readers, *Reading William Blake*, 1992). Blake is a difficult poet whose difficulty remains even after we note the various ideological factors. Students in my Romantic literature courses find Blake much more difficult than any of the other poets we read, and only so much can be factored out as my pedagogical incompetence. The fact is Blake's poetry requires a kind of reading that most readers find unusually challenging. One has to assume that Blake's first readers were similarly challenged; it is hardly necessary to find ideological causes for interpretive difficulty.

The second chapter focuses on antiquarianism, popular and scholarly, from Toland and Macpherson to Ritson. Mee shows how an English primitivism developed indigenously and in relation to Rousseau's. In Blake's writing the priestly Druids are opposed by the prophetic Bards, both of whom existed already as antiquarian types. Mee informatively glosses the tree symbol in Blake and in antiquarian writing. Especially useful are the pages on Joseph Ritson (113–20), the radical antiquarian scholar who debated the more popular and conservative Percy. Although hardly the first to show the poet's connections with antiquarianism, Mee shows how this living tradition shaped features of Blake's writing.

The third chapter on mythology and politics, like the last chapter on biblical criticism, presses the case for Blake's Enlightenment rationalism more strenuously than I think can be sustained, but Mee nevertheless depicts vividly several of the intellectual contexts within which Blake wrote and thought. Most impressive, perhaps, is Mee's showing how Los is shaped in part by the influence of Erasmus Darwin, but as soon as he concedes the difference between Darwin's materialism and Blake's divine humanity, we are once again back where we started, with a counter-Enlightenment Blake and the motto, "Mock on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau." It is nevertheless useful to know that during the English Enlightenment even Christian apologists were forced to deal with mythic imaginative constructions. Mee, however, aligns Blake rather too quickly, I believe, with the anti-Christians like Paine and Volney; is not Blake also a Christian apologist, however unorthodox? Mee does not think so.

In the fourth chapter Mee illustrates aspects of the Lambeth prophecies by showing the congruence between Blake's ideas and those of rationalist biblical critics like Paine, Geddes, and Volney, insisting that the prophecies are "political." However, insofar as Blake's satire constructs an opposition between the "stony Law" of Moses and the loving imagination of Jesus, it merely exploits the always already existing anti-Judaism at the heart of the most orthodox Christianity; one hardly needs the rationalist critique for statements against the "brutality" of the Old Testament. Moreover, if the Lambeth prophecies are "political, then in what ways? The category of the political is a vexed one in the book. When Mee takes critics to task for their

political shortcomings, he is least helpful: "Critics like [Leslie] Tannenbaum, ever eager to read political quietism in Blake's texts as early in the 1790s as possible . . ." (209). There is a confusion here between people, who can be either politically active or quietist, and writing, which cannot be either. The confusion is Mee's, not Tannenbaum's. There is no evidence of which I am aware that Blake was ever politically active. He could have joined the London Corresponding Society like his friend and fellow-engraver Sharp, but he seems not to have done so. If he participated in meetings, riots, demonstrations, or signed protest petitions, such participation has not left any evidence. However rebellious the meanings one can find in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, probably Blake's most radical text, one should not call it "activist," nor should one call "To Tirzah" or Milton "quietist." The opposition is false and misleading in two ways, suggesting that Blake renounced a politics there is no evidence he ever asserted in the first place, and that writing automatically gets translated into identifiable political deeds.

The conclusion is the book's weakest and shortest section, arguing unpersuasively that Blake's lack of popularity was because of his peculiar synthesis of rationalist and religious dissent, the former appealing to a bourgeois audience that found the latter plebeian and distastefully "enthusiastic" (223-24). Hypothetically one might grant the possibility that a bourgeois readership would see Blake as too radical, but what about the large readership of radical literature? Paine sold in the hundreds of thousands. Had Blake's primary aim been to reach the plebeian readership for political writing, one presumes he could have done so.

However imperfect, Mee's book is a genuine contribution to Blake studies, and especially to 1790s literary studies in general.

The late E. P. Thompson's book is more than just another contribution to Blake studies because Thompson was a political figure and thinker of considerable stature. It is ironic that this indefatigable political activist should author a final book about a poet who might never have participated in actual politics. That is just one of the ironies that arises reading these twelve chapters.

Thompson writes extensively on the antinomian context, most particularly the Muggletonians, a revolutionary sect from the Puritan revolution of the seventeenth century, and in general the late eighteenth-century antinomians who carried into the nineteenth century some of the earlier revolutionary "Ranting" and "enthusiasm." Thompson writes movingly, with sympathy and compassion, about the sect he believes is closest to representing Blake's own position, so that even if Blake were not an actual Muggletonian, he was a virtual one. Whereas Mee's Blake is a *bricoleur* combining various discourses, Thompson's is a single coherent figure, an antinomian, understandable only as such. Thompson even traced down the last living Muggletonian in England, helping to transfer the sect's records and papers to the British Library. Additionally, there are some astute pages of literary philology, as Thompson provides glosses on the "Divine Image," chartered and marks (for "London"), and the "Human Abstract."

Thompson was not able to find a definite link between Blake and the London Muggletonians of the day. Perhaps Blake's mother's family had some Muggletonians, but that is the closest link Thompson could find. Thomp-

son's argument depends less on proving Blake's membership in the group than in sharing its worldview, and on that issue he provides some compelling evidence. Expanding upon the findings of A. L. Morton, who first linked Blake with the "everlasting gospel" of antinomianism, Thompson describes the Muggletonians as the sect most Blakean among all the various dissenting religious influences to which the poet was exposed. In chapter six Thompson shows how, among the various survivors of the seventeenth-century revolutionary conflict, the Muggletonians stressed a fierce, Blakean opposition to a demonized "reason." They also repudiated the "moral law" in favor of the "everlasting gospel" of love, narrated the Fall with Blakean symbolism of the serpent copulating with Eve, repudiated entirely both priesthood and traditional liturgy (they met in a public house and sang songs composed by the various Muggletonian "prophets"). When God became Christ, according to the Muggletonians, there was then no other God but Christ. Thereafter, divinity was an entirely human phenomenon. One of the few groups to whom the logic and imagery of *The Book of Urizen* would not have been utterly strange was the Muggletonians. Unlike the Quakers, who accommodated themselves with the "Beast" of power ("hegemony"), the Muggletonians did not budge, refused to adjust their beliefs to the new conditions, even if they did cease to make actual war against the state and its church.

Thompson's will be the standard book of reference for Blake's antinomianism until a better one comes along. The antinomianism needs, however, to be more fully contextualized in terms of both Anglican doctrine and especially the Methodist movement, so that we can see just how "dissenting" Blake's religious ideas actually were. *Witness Against the Beast* has surprisingly little to say about the Methodists, who attracted in the eighteenth century far more plebeian adherents than the old Puritans. For a book that deals with theology rather extensively, it is also disappointing that it draws upon so little theology except antinomianism. Others will have to do this contextualizing work.

As Thompson positions himself outside Blake scholarship, so I feel justified in doing the same, and asking how Blake fits into Thompson's overall writing. The key chapter is, I think, the seventh, "Anti-Hegemony." According to Thompson, the Muggletonians and other antinomians "were hegemony's eighteenth-century opposition" (109). Blake, then, although he might never have been politically active, is for Thompson a political exemplar by embodying the position of "anti-hegemony." In Thompson's historically relativist scheme, Hegelian-Marxist Reason most cunningly and ironically descended upon an obscure London engraver who articulated the revolutionary message for that time, was indeed a "witness" against the "beast" of "hegemony." Blake provides the human face lacking in the rationalist materialism of Paine and Volney (and by implication, Marxism), the spiritual substance for atheistic radicalism. Thompson has long searched for something to rectify what he saw as the inadequacies of Marxism. His William Morris book, first written while Thompson was a Communist, tried to yoke Marxist "necessity" with Romantic imagination. Morris was the poet who became a militant, while at the end of his career as a militant Thompson appropriates a poet. It does not seem at all that Thompson was responding to religious stirrings of his own in his last years; rather, his very Marxist commitment

from the start required a spiritual, imaginative, ethical "supplement." Morris was an acceptable additive because he was, after all, a militant activist in the Marxist movement. Blake was equally acceptable because of his plebeian social status and the absence of any signs of compromise with the powers that be (that latter assumption is more than a little questionable). As Blake's religion can be construed plausibly as humanistic, it can coexist, if uneasily, with Marxist atheistic materialism. If Blake can be hitched to "anti-hegemony" and appropriated for Marxism, Thompson has effectively increased the prestige, especially the "humanistic" dimension, of a Marxism that is beginning to seem now almost as antiquated as Muggletonianism.

Blake hardly needs the help that Marxism now does. That, however, is another subject for another occasion. Nevertheless, there is a real issue that Thompson's book raises: who can appropriate Blake? for what purposes? Thompson argues against the claims of critics like "Miss Raine" (however much he disliked Raine, did he also have to use the sexist designation?), who align Blake with the occult and mystical, with such passion and conviction that clearly the stakes are high. Do only certain kinds of poets provoke this kind of battle for ownership? I don't think there is a similar battle over, say, Shakespeare or Wordsworth, but there is one over Shelley (or there used to be). Blake, like Shelley, wrote some of the most radical verse in English, so that later radicals have wanted to preserve that radicalism, but both poets also wrote verse that might be radical in some senses but is also quite readable in other ways—Neoplatonic, mystical, and so on. Then what? Blake's case is more difficult because we have so little to go on other than the actual poetry, but Thompson's book does help us, I think, in reading the poet. That seemingly otherworldly, apolitical meanings are more accurately interpreted in terms of a decaying antinomian tradition does indeed matter.

With Mee and Thompson we are a long way from Frye's "Orc cycle" and Bloom's apocalyptic prophet against nature. The Bronowski-Erdman tradition of reading Blake as a radical, which Mee and Thompson continue, has been strongest in establishing contexts and providing discrete gloss; it has been weakest where the Frye-Bloom tradition has been strongest, in providing overall readings of individual poems and the entire Blakean oeuvre. Neither Mee nor Thompson rectifies the weaknesses of the tradition in which they are working.

Neither book deals with Joseph Viscomi's work, which was published too late for either of them to mention, but Viscomi's *Blake and The Idea of the Book* (Princeton, 1993) and his subsequent work will probably redefine Blake studies in dramatic ways that neither Mee's nor Thompson's will. Viscomi's encyclopedic research into the processes of Blake's printmaking and book-making suggests a "Blake" adequately described by neither Frye nor Erdman. Although the Bronowski-Erdman tradition will continue to provide us with local insights and informative contexts, the most exciting future of Blake studies seems to belong elsewhere.



*Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* by Richard J. Gerrig. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993. Pp. xii + 274, \$30.00.

Early in *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading*, Richard Gerrig recalls the disciplinary divide opened between psychology and literary criticism through Wimsatt and Beardsley's invocation of the "affective fallacy," the false hope of grounding criticism in psychological perspectives. Gerrig, an associate professor of psychology at Yale, recalls this moment to make amends with literary theorists: "in the decades since Wimsatt and Beardsley stated their objections," Gerrig writes, "researchers have made progress toward developing an experimental psychology of reader response that is not so easily assailed" (26). In the intervening decades, literary criticism has also witnessed sweeping changes, becoming more interested as well in the psychology of reading. Gerrig's book seeks to take advantage of these trajectories, to offer an interdisciplinary beginning, and to start drawing together the insights of the two seemingly different research agendas in an attempt to redress the affective fallacy, finding common ground with literary critics in psychology's accounts of a reader's cognition.

Gerrig proposes that it is in fact the reader's act of cognitive integration of textual cues with memories that defines the experience of the "narrative world" of literature. Gerrig develops this cognitive point into a phenomenological account of reading a narrative by claiming that actively participating in the construction of a narrative, a reader is transported, is so invested in the experience as to be cognitively removed from the immediate surroundings. This basic position provides the framework through which Gerrig proceeds to describe, throughout the book, the cognitive and phenomenological overlap in reading. While he derives his arguments about cognition primarily from his own empirical research, the results verify and extend well-established psychological theories. Such theories, that readers "make" meaning in response to an active, contextualized experience with texts, also have well-established parallels with reader-response theory.

One of the more thoroughly worked out versions of these connections is found in the social-cognitive theories of James Wertsch, who exploits the dialogic literary theories of M. M. Bakhtin and the closely allied psychological theories of Bakhtin's fellow countryman, Lev Vygotsky. As Wertsch's theories are current in American cognitive research, and as he sets up a theory of textual cognition and narrativity through his use of Bakhtin, I was quite surprised to find no mention of him in Gerrig's Book. In fact, I was quite surprised to find such a limited use of literary theory, especially of reader-response theory, in a book promising to bridge a disciplinary divide. In addition, his use of literary examples was highly circumscribed, limited primarily to contemporary realist fiction. Gerrig did, however, make extensive use of Anglo-American linguistics and ordinary language philosophy. As a result of his choices, I found myself growing wary of Gerrig's claims, suspicious of his motives for wanting to generate accounts of the phenomenological experience of reading from accounts of the psychology of reading. In particular I wanted to know how his work answers to concerns in literary theory in general.

The answers came in chapter three, "Participatory Responses," where Gerrig discusses a reader's participation in a narrative. As a counter-example of participation, he states that readers who are so disinvested in a narrative as to be uninclined to yell "Watch Out!" when danger threatens an unsuspecting character, are choosing "not to participate in the appropriate way" (66). What might it mean to suggest the "appropriate way" to respond? For Gerrig, delineating the appropriateness of a reader's response is synonymous with identifying the cognitive dimensions of reading. Explicitly developing a cognitive perspective through which to appropriate the experience of reading, Gerrig implicitly develops a criterion for an appropriate narrative experience. Under the guise of empirical veracity, Gerrig universalizes the phenomenology of reading from cognitive experiments limited to experiences of realist fiction in which readers are constructed so as to seek after authorial intention. His conclusion to this chapter summarizes this quite neatly, "p-responses [cognitive responses] often function to enrich emotional and aesthetic aspects of a narrative world: by p-responding, readers draw themselves solidly into the narrative world" (96).

Yet Gerrig's argument seems to me to do more than attempt a scientizing of the experience of reading literature. In the context of the "crisis" in theory in English Studies, and the more general cultural debates over the value of literature and the professionalization of its study, I read Gerrig's arguments as an assault on the institutional and cultural role of the literary intellectual.

This became apparent to me in his misuse of Stanley Fish's work, one of the few theorists Gerrig argues from. Describing reading as a kind of conversational practice, Gerrig draws a direct link to Stanley Fish's concept of "interpretive community." Rather than accepting the full force of Fish's point that what counts as meaning, that what even counts as text, is inseparable from community practices, Gerrig reintroduces the author's intent, by constraining a reader's interpretation through the textual cues and linguistic features of the text. In Gerrig's view, readers can get the author's meaning because they "are able to review parts of a text that may figure heavily in the way an author establishes meaning" (122). Certainly there is a text to read and respond to, but the point, precisely the point Fish develops at length, is that the specific features of the text don't matter; what really matters is the context and the constraints within which the text is acted upon.

Gerrig under-appreciates Fish, but he also comes out strongly against Derrida in his discussion of John Searle. Gerrig reasserts that Derrida's demonstration in *Limited, Inc.*, "in no way undermines the claim that hearers, and readers, obligatorily strive to recover unique intentions" (139). Affirming the "psycholinguistic gestalt for theories of 'actual behavior.'" Gerrig concludes, "Derrida might work to reform the rules of 'reading' but he cannot legislate cognitive processes out of existence" (140). Perhaps not. But Gerrig has once again missed the full force of the argument. The point is, at least from a poststructuralist perspective, that the "cognitive processes" are always already written, and they are most certainly rewritten in cognitive psychology, a discourse that then reinscribes them in acts like reading, producing a chain of signifieds without any solid originary grounding in either intention or cognition.

In the final chapter, referring to the famous passage in Plato's *Republic* banishing poets from the ideal state, Gerrig offers what seems his real interest in narrative. Inferring that poetry must matter a great deal, he proposes in this chapter to develop a psychological theory "to match Plato's certainty that stories matter" (197). Does Gerrig think then that poets should be banished? Not hardly. Rather he invokes Plato to enter the contentious debate about just how it is poetry, stories, and narratives "matter." He argues that "fictional information has real-world effects." Gerrig's aim is clear, to trace out real-world effects that align with "psychological models of the uptake of fictional information, both with respect to mental representations and to moment-by-moment processing" (202).

In making this claim, Gerrig misrepresents the tradition of literary criticism as simply Coleridgean "aestheticism" (202). Invoking "professional readers," he states, "theories of literary criticism that attempt to regulate real-world effects of fiction out of existence fail to capture the real-world activities of competent readers. What I suggest . . . is that theories of the experience of fiction have quite regularly obscured the pathways through which fictions can have good or ill effects on such readers" (207). Gerrig argues that the pedagogical implications of this view, that students as readers can be trained to "experience fictional narratives in such a way that they could treat them only as aesthetic objects" (203), runs counter to empirical evidence of the deep "cognitive structure" of narrative experiences: "Whatever new language games theorists might invent to strengthen the [aesthetic] ideal will necessarily clash with inherent psychological properties" (203).

I take exception to Gerrig's assault on English Studies from the Psychology Department, his view that literature departments in the institutionalization of their reading strategies aestheticize and make fiction irrelevant. Not only are these claims uninformed, they rest on positivistic presuppositions. Certainly the processes of decoding, of reading, that Gerrig treats as natural are socialized—are manufactured through the organization and dissemination of texts within a culture. But Gerrig does not broach the question in this way, and as a result of not recognizing, as Wertsch does, the social dimension of cognition, he only provides a proscriptive perspective on strategies of reading he sees as not only "unnatural" but therefore as counterproductive.

Gerrig concludes this final chapter with a further suggestion for the place of aestheticized reading: readers may train themselves and others to "undertake special analysis of a text based on the beliefs that authors might purposely conceal meanings and that meanings might be hidden from even the authors themselves" (240). By exposing the irrelevancies that arise from overtheorizing or aestheticizing literature, Gerrig suggests that the aggressively controlled reading of literature requires a passive surrender to the more immediate, cognitive experiences of reading. Has he thereby answered the affective fallacy? Not in any satisfactory way. If he had read Stanley Fish more closely, he might have realized, "being interdisciplinary is so very hard to do."

*Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* edited by John R. Gillis. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Pp. xii + 290. \$35.00.

The introduction by John R. Gillis to this volume of essays provides a succinct orientation to the subjects subsequently examined while also whetting the reader's appetite to pursue immediately the different directions outlined. These studies' common goal is deceptively simple: given the status of memory and identity as political and social constructs and of their relationship as historically situated, "the record of that relationship can be traced through various forms of commemoration," i.e. various modes of coordinating "individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation" (5). Providing historical as well as sociocultural foci, these essays span several centuries (from early modern Europe to the present) and societies (from the Middle East to North America), and Gillis's remarks situate the development of the memory/identity nexus through the overlapping phases of the "pre-national" (up to the late 1700s), the "national" (end of the eighteenth century to the 1960s) and the current, "post-national" phase.

Some of the points that Gillis emphasizes are: the shifting class and fixed gender and race specificities of commemorative initiatives from one phase to the next; the struggles that occur between social groups when challenged by proposed commemorative events; the move from commemoration of the dead to the living and the consequent change of rituals; and above all, the role that "concerted forgettings" play in all processes of remembering (7-18). Underscoring the political stakes in the memory/identity relationship, Gillis argues that it was not until the 1960s and their aftermath that "a new iconoclasm" develops resulting in the search for "usable pasts capable of serving the heterogeneity of new groups that had become active on the national and international stage: racial and sexual minorities, women, youth, and dozens of new nations and ethnic groups aspiring to sovereign status" (19). However, the "democratization of memory" for those groups developing new identities becomes "profanation, or, what is worse, cultural suicide" for other groups invested in the sacredness of the nation-state (19). Hence, the battle lines are drawn on political, cultural and even commercial fronts, but Gillis maintains that in this transitional "era of plural identities," the publicizing of memories and identities is more necessary than ever in order to ensure "the democratic processes by which individuals and groups come together to discuss, debate, and negotiate the past and, through this process, define the future" (20).

The two essays constituting the volume's first section (entitled "The Problem of Identity and Memory") provide a solid basis from which the three subsequent sections can proceed. Richard Handler's opening "Is 'Identity' a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?" raises suspicions about this fundamental term as both a scholarly and cultural construct since its seeming "naturalness" belies the distinctive trait of "identity" as constituted within entirely situated contexts. Following recent scholarship that has emphasized various modes of constructing "identity," Handler argues that groups are best understood not as "bounded objects in the natural world . . . [but as] symbolic

processes that emerge and dissolve the particular contexts of action," a perspective requiring a language "other than the discourse of identity in order to be able to comment creatively upon that discourse" (30). From his examination of both non-Western and recent Western conceptions (e.g. in Jane Austen's novels) of individuality and social collectivity, Handler concludes that not only is our twentieth-century conception of "identity" inadequate for application to other periods and cultures, but also that "identity" contributes little to scholarship on "nationalist activism, historical preservation, and the creation of tradition" (37). He recognizes, however, the politically delicate problem raised by this latter objection since groups who frequently turn to such identity claims (e.g. ethnic leaders, ministries of culture) do so for legitimate political reasons, however hegemonic and ideologically oppressive such claims may ultimately be. Thus, Handler argues that the focus of scholarly critique should be on mainstream, and usually unchallenged, identity claims while constructively pointing out to minority groups the consequences of promoting homogeneous cultural constructs without due reflection (38).

David Lowenthal pursues similar lines of thought in the second chapter, "Identity, Heritage and History," stating that the title's first two terms currently "swim in a self-congratulatory swamp of collective memory" (41), an attitude often fuelling rivalry and conflicts. Having traced the submission of selfhood to collective consciousness in past memoirs, Lowenthal suggests that "heritage," once referring only to the attributes of the elite, now is a popular link, "distill[ing] the past into icons of identity, bonding us with precursors and progenitors, with our own earlier selves, and with our promised successors" (43). While remaining "metaphorically ancestral," says Lowenthal, heritage today functions mainly "to confirm the identity and boost the solidarity of nations and self-assured ethnic groups" (44). Heritage categories now become homogenized due, in large part, to global interdependence, and tend to exclude other groups' claims to virtue, civilization, and comparable worth. And the requirement that socially binding traditions be accepted on faith, not by reasoning, now distinguishes heritage from history: "Heritage thus defies empirical analysis; it features fantasy, invention, mystery, error" (49), through diverse modes of memorialization *and* amnesia. To the current rise of nationalist claims also corresponds the rise of extreme tension and conflict, as the evening news drives home daily, in the form of rivalries, disputes, and rhetorical bombast. Lowenthal concludes that comparison between heritages, rather than myopic insistence on exclusivity, can contribute to quelling such conflicts: "National heritage emerges from linkages (and rivalries) among all the identities that inhabit us" (54).

In order to highlight properly the different modes of commemoration constitutive of identity, memory and heritage, each subsequent section develops a particular (yet quite broad) focus.

In part two, "Memory in the Construction of National Identities," David Cressy considers the role of dynastic and church authorities in shaping popular understanding of early modern England's national memories and commemorations; John Brodner studies the debates over (official vs. vernacular) public memory with special focus on the stages of commemoration during this century in Cleveland, Ohio; Eric Davis examines the museum as form

and site of social control of both "high" and "low culture" in modern Iraq; and Yael Zerubavel juxtaposes the overlapping discourses of "history" and "legend" in Israeli commemoration of the (1920) Tel Hai battle.

In part three, "Memories of War and Wars over Memory," Kirk Savage defines the strategic functions of the Civil War memorial for recasting commemoration away from black emancipation and toward national reconciliation and harmony; Thomas W. Laqueur describes the "new era of remembrance" brought about through "naming" the European war dead as a process of memorialization following World War I; G. Kurt Piehler examines the United States government's strategy of creating the Gold Star Mother following World War I as a means to identify motherhood, and a certain kind of woman's identity, with the selfless sacrifice of their sons in defense of the nation; and Daniel J. Sherman studies the World War I monument in France as a site for conjoining "a variety of discourses and practices: local and national, commercial and artistic, high and low, and ultimately perhaps, history and memory" (187).

In part four, "Politics of Memory and Identity," Rudy J. Koshar considers the role of, and contradictions within, historic preservation of buildings and towns in Germany as a privileged mode both of memorialization and of coping with forms of nationalist insecurity; Herman Lebovics situates the cultural and political debates around the vexed and shifting questions of the "essential France" and authentic French heritage, focussing on cultural wars in the 1930s and 1960s; and Claudia Koonz examines the struggles of memorialization and historical amnesia related to concentration camp memorial museums in post-World War II Germany, East and West.

With these brief summaries, I mean merely to orient readers to what these essays might offer quite generally, leaving it to each reader, depending on his/her own interests, to pursue the in-depth process of discovery. I hope to have made clear the common effort by all the contributors to follow the broad lines of inquiry established in the introduction and opening chapters. In each of the cultural contexts examined, the contributors emphasize the diverse processes by which identity and memory are reciprocally constructed through commemoration and, concomitantly, how these constructions are variably exploited within particular socio-political and economic circumstances. Far from being rabidly relativist, however, the contributors draw conclusions based on very sound historical data succinctly presented. Yet, in doing so, they also avail themselves of many critical insights that have arisen from recent debates on the relationship of history to narrative and discourse theories. Hence, this volume offers not only an array of analyses of specific socio-historical practices, but also important examples of an unselfconscious and highly productive approach to *cultural studies*.

*Discovering Difference: Contemporary Essays in American Culture* edited by Christoph K. Lohmann. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. Pp. 203. \$29.95, cloth; \$12.95, paper.

In a speech entitled, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," poet Audre Lorde, writes about how a brush with cancer forced her to reevaluate her life. She reflects, "In becoming forcibly and essentially aware of my mortality, and of what I wished and wanted for my life, however short it might be, priorities and omissions became strongly etched in a merciless light, and what I most regretted were my silences" (*Sister Outsider* [Freedo, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984], 41). As an African-American lesbian poet, Lorde is acutely aware of how people perceive difference as a barrier rather than a bridge to each other. When difference creates distance within the academy, Lorde urges scholars "not to hide behind the mockeries of separations that have been imposed upon us and which we so often accept as our own" (Lorde, 43). At universities, allegiances to a specific discipline, research methodology, or subject or inquiry are some of the ways in which scholars build these fences of separation. For Lorde, only open dialogue can act as an antidote to this form of intellectual disengagement—"for it is not difference that immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken" (Lorde, 44).

In the introduction of the book, *Discovering Difference: Contemporary Essays in American Culture*, editor Christoph K. Lohmann presents the anthology as a collaborative effort in the spirit of Lorde's sentiments. At the onset, Lohmann expresses the hope that readers, like the audience of the lecture series on which the book is based, will experience "listening to different voices speaking to each other in open dialogue rather than for the purpose of waging intellectual turf battles" (xi). In literary and cultural studies, these "turf battles"—according to Lohmann—are being waged between "two warring factions: the 'traditionalists' and the 'poststructuralists' or 'multiculturalists'" (ix). For both sides in this academic contest the stakes are high. As Lohmann notes, "course offerings, degree requirements, and tenure and promotion criteria" often hinge on who decides what defines a field of inquiry, and the dissension that arises between the competing parties has a "polarizing effect" (ix).

*Discovering Difference*, "a deliberately eclectic collection of essays [that] may please neither the outside observer of the academic scene nor the specialist within the academy" (x), presents the alternatives of "dialogic engagement rather than rhetorical aggression" (xi). Using a chronological framework, the essays in *Discovering Difference* cover a broad expanse of time—from 1492 when Columbus "discovers" America to the 1992 Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas controversy. Within this large sweep across the centuries, the anthology proceeds to live up to its self-professed "eclectic" label as it offers ten essays engaging in the theme of "difference" from markedly different perspectives. *Discovering Difference* includes readings of literature, film, and television, as well as cultural and literary theory.

The literature essays alone attest to the diversity of the *Discovering Difference* project. In one of the first articles in the collection, Eva Cherniavsky uses Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* to illustrate how, in mid-nineteenth-

century America, sentimental novels both contribute to and complicate "the emergent ideology of the bourgeois nuclear family" (36), as the women readers of these novels established a "collective identity" which reinforced their sense of exclusion from the republican political order. Jonathan Elmer's essay, "Poe, Plagiarism, and the Prescriptive Right of the Mob," examines how the themes of Poe's story, "William Wilson," reflect its author's own opinions about plagiarism, which correspond to larger social anxieties in the nineteenth century about the "nature of identity . . . in what we might call the mass-textual world of publishing" (69). In his essay, "The Underheard Reader in the Writing of the Old Southwest," James H. Justus offers another perspective on the repercussions of the "mass-textual world of publishing" in nineteenth-century America. In the 1830s and 1840s, the writing of Southwestern humorists achieved mass appeal—culminating in the work of Mark Twain. Justus argues that while this style of writing celebrates and uses regional dialects for much of its humor, the humorists themselves rely on standard literary conventions to tell these stories, which subvert the power of "backwoods" vernacular speech. Justus writes, "[t]he authority lies not with those primitives who speak with vernacular bite but with the moderns who mimic those idioms in writing" (55). From this perspective, the Southwestern humorists' attempts to document difference—the "Otherness" of the "backwoods" dialect—in literary forms accentuate their distance from that oral subculture.

Alongside these articles on literature, the anthology also confronts the larger theoretical questions inherent in "discovering difference." In the essay, "Why Did the European Cross the Ocean? A Seventeenth-Century Riddle," Myra Jehlen discusses the distinction between the terms "other" and "difference," as well as the history of their use from Montaigne to Todorov. Jehlen contends that while "'other' seems to cast the speaker's cultural interlocutors in an inferior position . . . [t]he term 'different' proposes to right this imbalance by granting others identities of their own" (2). Regardless of the improvement of "different" over "other," Jehlen argues for the use of a third term, "contested zone," "meaning cultural areas and social regions that different groups seek to define each in its own way" (12). Similar to Jehlen's agenda, Cary Wolfe's article, "Antinomies of Liberalism: The Politics of 'Belief' and the Project of Americanist Criticism," also offers a critique of the ways in which scholars perceive "difference" by examining the dominance of liberalism in Americanist scholarship through a close analysis of the work of Walter Benn Michaels.

Two articles, Michel Rogin's, "The Great Mother Domesticated: Sexual Difference and Sexual Indifference in D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*," and Carolyn A. Mitchell's, "Choicelessness as Choice: The Conflation of Racism and Sexism," which analyze visual rather than literary texts, confirm the impressive range of *Discovering Difference*. For Rogin, close readings of the themes and images of D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* reveal pervasive cultural anxieties about the power of female sexuality in early twentieth-century America in light of the birth control movement. Mitchell's article examines the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill controversy and foregrounds the power of the television camera, which is "capable of manipulating public knowledge of an event, and ultimately, shaping public opinion" (190). Mitchell interprets the tele-



vised image of Thomas as he testified at his confirmation hearing. To uncover the political underpinnings of this image, Mitchell analyzes the camera's framing the nominee, against a backdrop of his wife, Virginia Thomas, and Republican Senator John Danforth, which accentuates the absence of Anita Hill. Mitchell's essay contributes to her strong belief that the public should not be "ignorant of the camera's politics" (198).

While Mitchell's essay addresses a contemporary event, three essays in *Discovering Difference* directly engage in questions of historical change. In "American Literature Discovers Columbus," Terence Martin traces the multiple ways that Columbus has been mythologized in the United States from the eighteenth century to the present. Through this history, Martin illustrates how shifts in America's national identity have required revisions of the Columbus myth from "discoverer" as hero to imperialist villain. Cynthia Griffin Wolff's essay, "'Margaret Garner': A Cincinnati Story," shares Martin's approach as it also argues that specific historical moments generate a need for specific stories and myths that speak to the concerns and anxieties of that time period. In the article, Wolff discusses how the "unspeakable" story of Garner, an enslaved woman who commits infanticide to protect her child from a life in slavery, finds a voice in Toni Morrison's 1987 novel, *Beloved*. In an astute historical comparison, Wolff compares Morrison's full dramatization of the story to Harriet Beecher Stowe's nineteenth-century depictions of slave existence in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Wolff uses this comparison to highlight the limitations of Stowe's antebellum novel, which maintains a silence about Garner's tale and therefore truncates the psychological complexity of slave existence.

Michael T. Gilmore's "Hawthorne and the Making of the Middle Class" also focuses on the antebellum novel—in this case, *The Scarlet Letter*—to examine the history of the formation of the middle class in the nineteenth century. Gilmore advances the argument that questions of class are often marginalized in the study of nineteenth-century American literature and need as much critical attention as race and gender have received. Through a close reading of *The Scarlet Letter*, Gilmore demonstrates how the book "participates in the project of shaping middle-class identity . . . [and] encodes the deep structures of the middle class within its discursive patternings" (89). The strength of Gilmore's thesis lies not simply in his assertion of the importance of class analysis, but in his argument that the tensions and ambiguities in *The Scarlet Letter* reflect the fluid and contested process of class formation. In other words, antebellum novels can be used to develop a more elaborate understanding of the internal conflicts within the development of nineteenth-century, middle-class identity.

If a reader turns to *Discovering Difference* to discover difference, the anthology clearly does not disappoint. The heterogeneity of the essays reflect the editor's sincere desire to present a multiplicity of voices. Yet, after completing all of the ten essays, I was disappointed that each of the "voices" presented spoke in isolation rather than in conversation with the others. If the objective of the book is "open dialogue" as Lohmann asserts, then the interchange needs to be explicit rather than implicit and left up to the reader to construct. A possible alternative to *Discovering Difference's* approach of presenting ten autonomous topics would be to ask several scholars to examine

one text, such as *The Scarlet Letter* or D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, from multiple perspectives. With this design, a reader could both "discover difference" in approach and witness dialogue as individual writers respond to the same work and to each others' analyses. The imperative of ending "intellectual turf battles" and breaking the silences that keep scholars from learning from each other is too important to ignore. *Discovering Difference* offers one possibility for ending these destructive patterns. May it inspire many more.

Yale University

Suzanne E. Smith

*Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism* by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. Pp. 153. \$59.95, cloth; \$16.95, paper.

Even as the MLA job list expands to incorporate the concept of "cultural studies" as a new area of specialization, the struggle to determine its parameters and define the theoretical and methodological paradigms for a cultural critique continues among professionals in the field. Sunder Rajan's book is a welcome addition to this ongoing debate and provides a refreshing insight into the problems and pitfalls, as well as the political necessity at this historical moment, for the development of a concept such as "cultural studies." Sunder Rajan defines the term "culture" as "the product of the beliefs and conceptual models of society and as the destination where the trajectory of its desires takes shape, as well as the everyday practices, the contingent realities, and the complex process by which these are structured" (10). By including both "conceptual models" and "contingent realities" in this definition, Sunder Rajan attempts to deconstruct the culture/society division and provides a space for a critique that is engaged equally with discourse and materiality. The key concept that enables such a critique is that of "representation." By exploring the heterogeneity of cultural representations and their resulting openness to interpretation as well as contestation, Sunder Rajan is able to combine a critique of ideology with a form of political intervention that provides a much needed bridge between feminist theory and praxis. However, the brilliant execution of this cultural analysis in this book is somewhat marred by Sunder Rajan's failure to engage in any detailed theoretical discussion of the central concept of representation. The only place that has any discussion of the term itself is in the chapter on women in politics where the focus is exclusively on questions of political representation rather than the broader category of cultural representation. The theoretical confusion thus generated complicates the question of agency in the analysis of representation of contestation in the final section of the book—how are these "self-representations" different from previous "representations"? Does their oppositional value lie in the interpretative act of the reader or in the female agency that is implicit in the very creation of these texts (as may be implied by the term "self-representation")? The failure of this book to provide clear answers to such questions leaves a serious gap in its theoretical framework.

This conceptual confusion, however, does not detract from the book's excellent analysis of the creation of female subjectivity and its reconstitution in the interests of feminist praxis. Through a very succinct and balanced summary of the current debates raging around the constitution of the subject Sunder Rajan proves the unsuitability, for a feminist praxis, of adopting either the universal humanist version of subjectivity or its total rejection by certain schools of poststructuralist thought. Sunder Rajan's theoretical inclinations are clearly closer to the latter position, and consequently, she introduces the concept of a "resisting subject" that allows for a measure of agency and thus fills the total vacuum left by the death of the subject while retaining a sense of the politics of difference by manifesting itself as contingent, varied, and flexible in its modes of resistance. The concept of the resisting subject provides an effective theoretical alternative both to Spivak's complete denial of our ability to access "real" women, as well as to Benita Parry's valorization of "real" women's voices in the form of artists and singers of sacred songs. In the context of feminisms' need to have a focal point for their programs of political intervention, I find this reconstitution of female subjectivity in terms of the resisting subject to be one of the most enabling strategies in the book.

The practical implications of this theoretical construct are clearly spelt out through Sunder Rajan's detailed analysis of sati, rape, and wife-murder (dowry deaths). Each of these discussions begins with a useful summary of the existing debates on the topic and points towards exciting new avenues of exploration. In the case of sati, for example, Sunder Rajan refuses primacy to questions of intentionality and voluntariness that are at the center of current pro- as well as anti-sati arguments, and, instead, chooses to focus on the materiality of the body in pain as it burns. This shift in focus not only highlights the immediate experiential quality of the act that is the subject of numerous theoretical debates but also allows Sunder Rajan to see, in the image of the burning woman straining to overcome her pain, a representation of a resisting subject who can no longer be viewed merely as a helpless victim.

In her analysis of sati in terms of the politics of pain Sunder Rajan draws upon Elaine Scarry's theoretical insights in *The Body in Pain*. This use of the work of a western scholar to examine a Third World phenomenon raises difficult questions about the possibly imperialist relationship between Western theory and Third World material. Concerns like those expressed by Chandra Mohanty of being "under Western eyes" are, in fact, a major area of inquiry in Sunder Rajan's work. Her self-reflexive positioning of herself, at the beginning of the book, as a postcolonial intellectual located in the Third World academy but with significant intellectual connections with the West, foregrounds problems of appropriation, complicity, and compromise that circumscribe desires for Third World autonomy. Sunder Rajan's personal stand with respect to this First World/Third World opposition is clearly stated in the "Introduction"—while recognizing the validity of such concerns she forcefully states the necessity for a feminist praxis to maintain a global perspective and to forge cross-cultural links without denying the reality of differences that do exist. Consequently, the outright rejection of any theoretical framework because of its Western connections is viewed as an unnecessary limitation imposed upon feminism. Instead she proposes a strategic use

of available resources that is constantly self-reflexive. Her use of Scarry's work illustrates this strategy by presenting a constant critique of the theoretical model even as it is used as a basis for further analysis. While appropriating the concept of a politics of pain from Scarry, Sunder Rajan questions the validity of representing pain as inarticulate which denies its potential for resistance. Furthermore, she recognizes that Scarry's book is caught in the classic orientalist bind of viewing the First World as the liberator and the Third World as victim. Her use of this work, even as she reveals its ethnocentric biases, makes her analysis itself an embodiment of the resisting subject.

Sunder Rajan's desire for a global feminist perspective is also evident in her cross-cultural selection of texts to be analyzed. Her chapter on rape and narrative representation draws upon the works of Richardson, Forster, Angelou, and Walker, along with both literary texts and films by Indian artists. The resisting subject here is seen in terms of narrative strategies that focus, in the texts by women, on the post-rape subjectivity of the woman. Such narratives present a direct contrast to the canonical First World textual representations of rape (in the characters of Clarissa and Adela Quested) that make rape the climax of the novel after which the woman's subjectivity is gradually allowed to fade away. The women's texts deny the act of rape this determining role in the constitution of women's subjectivity and thus challenge the fetishization of women as victims.

Sunder Rajan, however, does not present these women's texts as sites of resistance that exist outside, and in opposition to, the cultural field that includes Richardson and Forster. Wary of privileging a discourse of resistance that totally appropriates the cultural text—a danger that she perceives in Lalitha and Tharu's *Women Writing in India*—Sunder Rajan is careful to point out caste and class issues that compromise the oppositional force of these texts. Interestingly, though careful in the analysis of particular texts to avoid their appropriation for any single political agenda of her own, Sunder Rajan does not hesitate to use homogenizing categories such as "pre-colonial," "colonial," and "postcolonial" in her theoretical analysis. The practical dictates of language do, to a certain extent, explain the necessity for some such usages, but in a self-conscious theoretical work the unquestioning use of a term like "postcolonial," and references to an undefined "pre-colonial" period in Indian history, cause moments of concern that could easily be avoided by the addition of a few footnotes.

A more serious cause of concern is found in the discussion of women and politics which makes the reader question the theoretical framework specially constructed by the author for this work. In general terms I find this chapter to be one of the least inspiring sections of the book since it contains large sections where summaries of previous work done in the field are left to stand on their own with little or no additional analysis by the author. The exclusive emphasis on the figure of Indira Gandhi in the title of the chapter as well as in certain sections of the text that provide her biographical details is misleading since the chapter does not in the final instance provide any significant analysis of her political career. The specificity of Indira Gandhi is subsumed by the category of "elite women in politics." A consideration of the latter issue is in itself an important topic of discussion but the author

fails to successfully integrate the particular with the general in the organization of this chapter.

The high point of this chapter is the use of Jacqueline Rose's analysis of the place of women writers in feminist criticism as a means of highlighting certain anomalies in the situation of elite women in politics. The categories of the literary and the political are not collapsed, but a very fruitful parallel is drawn between the largely "unrepresentative" quality of both women writers and women leaders vis-à-vis the majority of women who inhabit a comparatively subaltern position in society. Insead, true representation is found in the concept of the "collective," and this leads Sunder Rajan to a discussion of the role of women in the local panchayats of the villages of India. Interestingly, the resisting subject in this chapter is presented not in terms of any text of cultural representation but rather as a case study of Vitner, a small village in Maharashtra. There is no reference in the text of the chapter to the sources for this sociopolitical information (which are listed in the footnotes), and consequently, it appears to stand unmediated through any form of textual representation—a form of presentation that is found only in this chapter focusing on politics. This significant departure from her usual strategies of cultural analysis, combined with her assertion that questions concerning political power are more "morally vexed" than those of literary creation, appears to resurrect a hierarchical relationship of mutual exclusion between the terms "real" and "imaginary" that is so carefully deconstructed throughout the rest of the book.

The theoretical and analytical confusion created by this chapter, however, does not seriously compromise the critical significance of the work as a whole. Chapters such as the one on dowry deaths and the final one on the representation of the "new woman" in India embody the greatest strengths of this book. Through a brilliant deconstructive strategy Sunder Rajan undermines the speech/silence opposition by revealing how either of these can be used for both oppression and resistance. The political connotations of the silenced subaltern are challenged by the use of authorial silence in works such as Anuradha Ramanan's "The Embrace" where the ambiguity thus generated is potentially subversive. Similarly, the privileged position of speech in terms of individual expression and subjectivity is significantly undermined by speech acts such as the dying declarations of burnt wives who acquit their husbands of all blame. Sunder Rajan then proposes "action" as an arena of resistance for the silenced gendered subaltern. However, as the analysis of the film *Khoon Bhari Maang* illustrates, the representation of "action" is also circumscribed by oppressive ideological manipulations. Action, therefore, is not presented as a "purer" form of resistance than speech. Rather, "action" acts like the third point on a triangle that places the speech/silence dichotomy under erasure and expands the scope for a consideration of resisting subjectivities.

The final chapter is primarily concerned with the opposition between tradition and modernity that provides the framework for media representations of the "new woman" in India. These "imaginary" constructions of women's subjectivity soft-peddle the historical specificity and complexity of these opposing demands on women by presenting images of effortless reconciliation where the "modern" is seen as a simple extension of the "traditional." As the

idea of women's liberation is embodied in a line of figures stretching from Draupadi to Laxmibai, the need for a contemporary feminist movement is made redundant. At the same time, the focus of state policies and journalistic coverage on "women's issues" further limits any space for an autonomous feminist consciousness founded upon female agency. Such a siege of feminism requires a feminist project that provides conceptual alternatives to these "imaginary" constructions which represent women's autonomy within a viable social structure. Sunder Rajan locates such representations of "real" women in self-consciously feminist texts engaging with the complexity of a social reality that makes women both "conflicting subjects and sites of conflict," and presenting modes of resistance rooted in this reality. The "real" nature of these cultural representations, as opposed to the "imaginary" character of mass media representations, is seen as a function of their engagement with the material reality of historical contingency and social complexity rather than any claims of ideological neutrality.

*Real and Imagined Women* may contain conceptual ambiguities that, at times, weaken its interpretative framework, but its overall project of presenting a theoretical perspective on postcolonial feminism rooted in cultural analysis is deftly executed, which makes it an essential read for scholars engaged in debates regarding postcolonialism and cultural studies. Sunder Rajan has made a notable contribution to these fields not only through the brilliant insights provided by her readings of the individual texts, but also through her use of challenging new strategies of cross-cultural analysis that will prove to be indispensable for further work in the area of postcolonial feminism. Intellectually stimulating and politically empowering, this work of Indian feminism is an important bridge between feminist scholars working in the "First" and the "Third" world.

Wayne State University

Suchitra Mathur