

## ***Book Reviews***

***The Man From Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister.* By P.B. Waite. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985. Pp. ix, 547. \$37.50.**

Students of Canadian history remember Sir John Thompson, if they remember him at all, as the man who died too soon. He was Sir John A. Macdonald's last Minister of Justice, and would have become prime minister after the Old Chieftain's death except for one thing: he was a convert to Roman Catholicism and needed to find a strong Ontario Protestant as lieutenant. In 1891 this presented too many difficulties, and a Montreal senator, Sir John Abbott, became prime minister instead. Thompson was government leader in the House of Commons, however, and when a year later Abbott became ill Thompson was the only choice, the one man who might be able to keep the Conservative party together in the midst of the sectarian storms raised by the Manitoba schools question. After two years in office he died suddenly, at only 49 years of age. The party soon tore itself in pieces, and in 1896 the Liberals, led by Wilfrid Laurier, gained power. Thompson's name became obscure.

Professor P.B. Waite has been an admirer of Thompson for years, as readers of *Arduous Destiny: Canada 1874-1896* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971) are surely aware. In that book, as in *The Life and Times of Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962) and in his popular biography, *Macdonald: His Life and World* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975), Professor Waite has demonstrated his mastery of the relevant sources. He probably knows late nineteenth century Canada better than any other living historian. Furthermore, he has made full use of the extensive papers left by Thompson. These include a large collection of his letters to his wife, Annie Affleck, to whom he wrote every day when he was away from home. Written in a special shorthand, these letters were not deciphered and transcribed until 1978. Professor Waite comments that "it is the greatest husband-and-wife correspondence of any of the prime ministers." His personal admiration, scholarly research and a superb sense of style have come together in a splendid biography that reads like a novel. *The Man from Halifax* is difficult to put down; one is sorry it has to end. It brings to life a lawyer, judge and politician who is eminently worth remembering.

Thompson largely lacked personal ambition. Making money did not interest him; he "believed that it was impossible for a man with right instincts to derive satisfaction out of wealth." As a consequence he was often hard up, and his death left his family in near-poverty. That he had little political ambition is more surprising. But he was an excellent lawyer who was conspicuously fairminded, decent and incorruptible; he therefore necessarily came to the favourable attention of others. His wife, moreover, whom he loved almost to excess, was ambitious for him and sometimes pushed him along when by himself he would not have moved.

Thompson followed Joseph Howe into the post-Confederation Conservative party. In 1878, aged almost 33 (he had been admitted to the bar at 19!), he became Attorney General of Nova Scotia. Four years later he served briefly as caretaker premier of the province before leaving politics to take a place on the bench of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. He was as distinguished a judge as he had been a lawyer, but by 1885 Sir John A. Macdonald was pressing him to leave the bench and enter the federal cabinet. Thompson was susceptible to appeals to his sense of duty and, encouraged by his wife, he took office as Minister of Justice in September 1885. Almost immediately he was one of Macdonald's key lieutenants.

Not only did Thompson earn his spurs in Ottawa, but he also stood out as a diplomat and negotiator, earning a knighthood for his work in Washington on a new Atlantic fisheries treaty. In 1893 he played a major part in Paris in the arbitration of the Bering Sea sealing dispute with the United States. His efforts there brought him admission to Her Majesty's Privy Council. He was only the second Canadian (Macdonald was the first) to be thus honoured. The ceremony—he sold a piece of property in Halifax in order to be able to pay for the full Privy Council uniform—took place at Windsor Castle on 12 December 1894. At the luncheon that followed, Thompson died of a heart attack.

Was there a Thompson legacy? His major contribution was the Criminal Code (1892), which is only now undergoing complete revision. We also owe the legislation instituting Labour Day to him. Professor Waite admits that beyond this there is not much. But at the time his influence was considerable. His tolerance, good sense, strength of character and obvious competence won him admirers even among his political opponents. He had limitations, of course: he was incapable of the smooth manipulation of difficult colleagues in which Macdonald excelled. At times he was too blunt or too distant; he was respected rather than loved. Yet his directness adds to his attractiveness. One has to like a man capable of writing to a supplicant: "You begin your letter by asking the question: 'Why do you refuse to give me a position?' In reply I beg to suggest a still more pertinent question—why do you persist in demanding from me a position that is in no way connected with my department and which is not in my gift?"

In reading this book one comes to have real affection for its subject. As a consequence the chapter describing his death and funeral is genuinely

moving. The man should not have died; the story should have gone on!

The comment is sometimes made that biography is not at the cutting edge of the historical discipline. If this is true, so much the worse for the cutting edge. A book like Professor Waite's reminds us that, in a very important sense, there are only two kinds of historical writing, good and not so good. *A Man from Halifax* is among the best. It tells us much about the practice of law, politics, parliamentary life, judging, lawmaking and diplomacy, as well as about Halifax and Ottawa from the 1860s into the 1890s. It does so with high intelligence, urbanity and a fine sense of humour. It should appeal equally to the scholar and the general reader. It deserves the highest recommendation possible: buy it and enjoy!

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Michiel Horn

***Henry Fielding: Justice Observed.* Ed. K.G. Simpson. Critical Studies Series. London: Vision; Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1985. Pp. 205. \$20.00.**

In recent years the "Critical Studies Series" (Vision/Barnes & Noble) has produced a number of essay-collections on literary figures of the eighteenth century: Sterne, Johnson, Smollett, Goldsmith, Burns, Defoe, and now Fielding. *Henry Fielding: Justice Observed* contains nine essays by a variety of critics, some of whom are specialists in periods other than the eighteenth century, and is meant to be "accessible to undergraduate and general readers" as well as original enough to interest "Fielding scholars" (front cover). While not mutually exclusive, these two objectives are difficult to achieve simultaneously, and trying to realize them in the same collection is perhaps not feasible. Parts of *Justice Observed* will certainly appeal to the general reader, but one feels that these will not be the same parts as those which might interest the Fielding scholar. Hence, neither will find the collection completely satisfying, but neither will be completely disappointed either.

In his introduction, K.G. Simpson, who edits the collection, claims that the "essays acknowledge the diversity of Fielding's experience as citizen, magistrate, political writer, and dramatist" (p. 7). This is a little misleading; the collection definitely emphasizes the significance of Fielding's judicial concerns in his major novels. His theatrical works and political journals are ignored, except for Morris Golden whose contribution traces Fielding's shifting Whigism. Nor is there anything which focuses specifically on *Jonathan Wild* or *A Voyage to Lisbon*. Instead, variations of the argument that the major novels force the reader to recognize the intricacies and importance of moral judgement appear throughout (pp. 28-30, 75-81, 150, 169). The last variation is rendered by Simpson himself who attempts to show how the "limitations" of both the narrator and

Allworthy point to Fielding's belief that "any fixed and single view-point is necessarily inadequate to cope with judgement of the complexity and flux of experience" (p. 169). The argument is, of course, valid but one might wonder how Simpson, who deals solely with *Tom Jones*, could avoid commenting on the narrator's caution about condemning Black George too hastily (Book VII, Chapter I).

The use of non-specialists can often be very positive in the sense that a critic from outside the field may be in a better position to see an issue which the more myopic of Fielding scholars would miss. In *Justice Observed*, for instance, Neil Rhodes, who has published on Thomas Nashe and Donne, elucidates various subtleties about "innocence" in *Joseph Andrews* among them being Joseph's "uncharitable" preservation of virtue in face of Lady Booby's solicitations (p. 107). However, the repetition and language, in parts of the collection at least, suggest that the editing may have been rather loose. To be sure, editorial freedom often allows for the eccentrically pleasing expression, which is usually preferable to mundane and pedestrian conservatism, but it can also permit the infelicitous comparison. For example, Patrick Reilly calls Tom Jones "the Augustan Midnight Cowboy" (p. 92).

Still, there is much in the collection that should stimulate, and sometimes even excite, readers. Donald Low argues quite convincingly that the startling image of the drunken mother dropping her child in Hogarth's "Gin Lane" may well be based on some comments concerning the evil of drunkenness in Fielding's social tract *An Enquiry into the Cause of the late Increase of Robbers, etc* (pp. 19-20). After a careful consideration of the political journals (*The Champion*, *True Patriot* and *Jacobite Journal*), Golden claims "[i]nsofar as the novels recreate the world, Fielding cannot help imagining them with political context and connection" (p. 48). The subject of Fielding's politics has been a popular and contentious one in the past few years, and Golden's essay seems to be an answer to two recent book-length studies (Brian McCrea, *Henry Fielding and the Politics of Mid-Eighteenth-Century England*, U. of Georgia, 1981; and Thomas R. Cleary, *Henry Fielding: A Political Writer*, Wilfrid Laurier, U.P., 1984). Despite a slow beginning and a servile attitude toward Martin Batestin (the latter being completely understandable), Lance St. John Butler goes on to present strong evidence "for reinstating Shaftesbury somewhere near the centre of Fielding's moral world" (p. 57). In "The Story-Telling in *Joseph Andrews*," Bryan Burns insightfully analyzes "the aesthetic appeal and comic vivacity" of the novel which is largely composed of "a sense of the unexpected and incongruous" (p. 120). Although his primary concern lies with the three interpolations (history of Leonora, Mr. Wilson's history, and the story of Leonard and Paul) and how they interrupt the main narrative line, one still wonders why Burns did not address the most obvious interruption in *Joseph Andrews*, which occurs in Book III, Chapter X. Here the polemical dispute between the poet and the player, or "dance between the acts," serves to keep the reader (much like Joseph himself) in anxious suspension about Fanny's fate and does so

with a tantalizing self-conscious statement on mingling satire or humour with grave action. Some readers find the chapter disturbingly facetious (in light of Fanny's imminent rape), yet Fielding—forever in control narratively—is merely exercising his master talent of engaging the reader.

Mark Kinkead-Weekes makes a useful distinction between wisdom as "*prudentia*" and as "*sophia*" in his essay, "Our of the Thicket in *Tom Jones*." The former is primarily a rational faculty and, ironically, in a novel which seems to have prudence as its central ethical concept, the character who seems to demonstrate the best "*prudentia*" is the villain Blifil. The hero, according to Kinkead-Weekes, possesses the latter or "*sophia*" which is "not a rational quality, but a perceptiveness of the heart." Whereas "*prudentia*" involves practical knowledge, "*sophia*" implies the knowledge of both the human and the divine (pp. 147-148). Donald Fraser's "Lying and Concealment in *Amelia*" is one of the best essays in the collection. Fraser traces various patterns of deception and concealment in the novel and then shows how they "point up the ethically ambiguous property of lies, in their ability to produce providentially sound results despite their moral reprehensibility" (p. 178). According to Fraser, concealment "may climactically be employed for the ultimate purposes of truthful revelation, as fiction itself, with its progressive sets of mysteries and clarifications, may also be a servant of moral truth, and immune to accusations of lying" (p. 196). Undoubtedly, the essay will become a standard reference point for *Amelia* critics.

The unevenness of *Justice Observed* is clearly a consequence of the editorial decision to try to appeal to the general reader as well as the Fielding scholar. But the value of this two-fold objective is to force the scholar to avoid pedantry and the general reader to tackle relatively sophisticated and penetrating critical arguments. In spite of a certain amount of repetition, this collection of essays on Fielding does add to our knowledge and appreciation of that great comic novelist.

Dalhousie University

David McNeil

***Studies in Literature and the Humanities: Innocence of Intent.* By George Whalley, Edited by Brian Crick and John Ferns. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1985. Pp. 270. \$25.00**

In a 1977 address to Queen's University, where he was for many years the most prominent and persuasive spokesman for the humanities, George Whalley issued a challenge to university professors of literature which was as discomfiting as it was inspiring, as authoritative as it was self-revealing. "What matters in the end," he asserted, "is not so much the design of courses, and programmes . . . as the living presentation by instructors of the principles and qualities that we espouse" (201). Our goal as teachers of

poetry is not, ultimately to amass and convey the information which will lighten its obscurities, or to outline the formulae whose application to poetry will provide the satisfaction of engaging in a scientific practice; it is the much more difficult one of conditioning minds to be exquisitely sensitive to the nuances of language, to be hesitant to impose theoretical principles upon it, to be capable in the end of respecting and being illuminated by what cannot be understood; it is, most importantly, to do this through the example of our *own* delicacy of perception, our own self-effacement and deference to the poems we presume to teach. Those who studied with Whalley before his death in 1983 emerged from his classes with sketchy notes but with sharpened senses, with the profound sense of having acquired a knowledge of Coleridge's theory of the imaginative process not through having had it *explained*, but through having watched it *happen*. Their experience left them somewhat vague on the matter of specific sources and references, and somewhat blind to the assumptions they had been mesmerized into accepting, but deeply and irrevocably certain of the sense of value, the motions of mind and feeling, which were Coleridge's. Whalley's prescription that professors should teach by *being* as much as by *meaning* would serve as a suitable epigraph to this posthumous collection of his work, the combination of blindness and insight typical of his students an apt indicator of its value.

Common to all the essays in *Innocence of Intent*, be their overt purpose practical criticism, or the assertion of principles to guide teaching and research, is a characteristically Romantic hostility to the mechanical, goal-oriented endeavours of the analytical intellect, and a celebration of the organic, heuristic activities of the intuitive imagination. The encounters with poetry which we should make possible for our students, and the experiences from which we should allow our own scholarly writing to spring, are to Whalley moments of "wonder" and "delight" (223), in which we transcend our habitual self-preoccupation, our wilful urge to analyse and interpret, and apprehend something normally inaccessible: the "experience of life" (177) undergone by more copious, daring and agile minds, embodied in the "harmonic universe" (219) of the poem. Out of these moments of "quietness and submission" (222), of "innocence of intent" (217), will spring processes of critical expression which steadily resist the application of formal methodologies which allow the "facts of the poem" (222) to guide us, in the "wording out of our reflection" (225), to unanticipated conclusions. Whalley's descriptions of the contemplative and organic activities of mind stop just short of the mystical; they belong not so much in the tradition of the transcendental Idealist theories of nineteenth century Romanticism and Symbolism as with the twentieth century reformulations of these, in language psychological rather than metaphysical, by Richards, Valéry, Eliot or Langer (writers whom he frequently seems to paraphrase and in a suitably Coleridgean fashion fails to footnote). His repeated contention that an appropriately submissive contemplation of poetry will enable access to the psychological "events" (177) embodied there, a belief which informs his own essays on Coleridge,

Jane Austen and E.J. Pratt, allies him, too, with phenomenological critics like Georges Poulet. His insistence on the inextricability of language and authorial intention, and his unquestioning faith in the unalloyed poetic "facts" which await non-banal minds, properly attuned, will no doubt offend post-structuralist critics as naive, autocratic and elitist. Sadly, perhaps, there are few who have had any contact with recent developments in critical theory who will now be able to accept his assumptions, to regard his criticism, when they have recovered from the effects of its subtle, reverent and humane eloquence, as much more than a curiously anachronistic playing-out of certain Romantic notions about language and mind.

Perhaps the most salutary effect of the Romantic undercurrent in *Innocence of Intent* will be the opposition it poses to the direction in which social, political and economic pressures are now propelling the humanities in Canada. In the final essay in the collection, Whalley traces the events which have led to the current compulsion to legitimize our profession by pointing to its *products*—the scholarly articles and books whose titles lend distinction to *curricula vitarum* and annual departmental reports. He goes on to issue a plea that in our hurry to justify ourselves to potential employers and funding bodies we do not neglect what must be, after all, our final role as scholars and teachers, a role, he stresses, that is "too imprecise and subversive . . . to merit a productivity rating" (239). This, he says, is the cultivation in ourselves, and through our example in others, of an increased accuracy of perception and judgement, a greater capacity for sustained reflection, and a more agile facility with language; it is something "fulfilled upon the whole person," something "recognisable but neither definable nor predictable" (245), something subtly effected in that un navigated *process* of encountering and discussing literature from which our publishable criticism is only incidental fruit. Whalley's request that we attend to this elusive purpose at a time when jobs and funds are scarce, and the demand for concrete achievement especially pressing, is an appeal to us to submit to a final, and particularly courageous kind of "innocence of intent". It is a challenge, he argues convincingly, that we will ignore at the peril of all that is truly legitimate about our vocation.

*Queen's University*

*Patricia Rae*

***Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction.* By William Ray. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984. Pp. 228. Pb., no price given.**

At first glance one might both welcome and decide to ignore this book. It looks like an introductory text, yet another popularising summary, à la Culler, of deconstructive theory. Its chapters on Poulet, Sartre, Blanchot,

Dufrenne, Ingarden, Iser, Norman Holland, Hirsch, Culler, Eco, Derrida, Fish, Barthes, and deMan might seem just the kind of crib one needs for an undergraduate exposition; something just suited to the institutionalizing needs of literary criticism wanting to accommodate and tame the theoretical threat. Equally, one might just be tempted to avoid yet another predigestion and go straight into one's own readings of the authors in question.

Ray's book proves to be more than its appearance. Indeed he does give useful summaries of the ideas of the authors he treats, but he does so in a manner that is both historical and theoretical. His practice of exposition, as he insists, is also the advancing of a theory. The weakest chapter in the book is perhaps that on Derrida, who is slighted for the somewhat odd claim that his work is so wide-ranging in its implications as not to be primarily focussed on the question under discussion: 'literary' meaning. Ray's differentiation between literary and other meaning is superficial and unjustified at best, so this arbitrary exclusion seems motivated. Ray's thesis is that the double bind of meaning that is at the heart of deconstructive activity is not a new discovery; phenomenological speculation on meaning has long since become the habit by which we consider meaning as having two poles: speaker's meaning and system's meaning. Ray's analyses of the phenomenological thinkers shows tellingly how their attempts to reduce meaning to a single pole inevitably leads their theories into a contradiction with their practise. The 'perversities' of their thought are uncovered by a deManian insistence on following out the logic of their own terminology. Derrida then is seen as little more than one who has spelled out the inherent contradictions of earlier thinkers on meaning. And one suspects that since it is the purpose of Ray's book to do that spelling out at length, he feels some rivalry with Derrida's pre-eminence, which is dismissed as some kind of aberrant political fad.

Nevertheless, Ray's thesis is worth attending. He does not claim that there is a direct line of influence or evolution from phenomenology to deconstruction. Rather he engages in a discussion of the nature of literary meaning that has all the ease of access of common-sense, without being reductive. The inevitable contradictions of those who think inside a system of meaning that is double-sided and yet want it to be otherwise are brilliantly analyzed. Ingarden, Iser, Culler, the structuralists, are all shown to be blindly adhering either to the subjective (speaker's meaning) or the objective (system's meaning), at the expense of the investigation of the 'dialectic' nature of meaning. The book concludes with the investigation of some recent dialectical models, or practises, of meaning, in Derrida, Fish, Barthes and deMan. Ray is alert to the dangers for any new mode of thought; it quickly becomes ossified, and he traces out Barthes' responses to this danger. He cites deMan as the critic most aware of the dangers, and sees his ironic depths as most likely to avoid either anti-institutional solipsism (or Barthesian hedonism and historical irrelevance) on the one hand and institutional rigidity on the other (as in Fish's



belief in belief and persuasion which serves, ironically like Hirsch's thought, to re-instate a highly conservative authoritarian academy). Irony itself, of course, can be paralytic, and Ray speculates on the productive possibilities for the critic now that deconstruction has fully invaded the academy. As he says, those who are waiting apprehensively for the beast to spring, for the revolution, have already missed it, since it came into being with the earliest speculations on the nature of meaning by the phenomenologists. After irony then, and divested "of their closure, the writing of history and the writing of theory can transcend their dispute over authority." After and in the midst of demystification, "the *institution* of dialectical meaning can merge history and theory into a single gesture rendered innocent by the loss of its truth claims." In this paradoxical new world, "future critics will recover, on the far side of irony's absolute freedom, the charm of simple historical (arti)fact. At this point our writing will regain its power through the loss of its privilege; history and theory will merge with interpretation in an eclectic form of literary study less obsessed with controlling truth than (perhaps) with its ability to provoke the pleasure of new ideas." One suspects that the self-effacing wording of this does not altogether hide the author's belief that he is working on this far side of absolute freedom, and there seems no reason to deny him this ground.

One might wonder, however, to what extent Ray's own practise instantiates his theory, since it is his own method to analyze his authors in this way. One would want to know if he himself is self-consciously deconstructing himself, if his own investigations hover indeterminably between system and intention. One can only say that on the surface of it the book does not read as if it were consciously performing its own irony, demonstrating its own inability to control truth. Rather, what is so satisfying, to some, will be the authority with which Ray shows that the anti-authoritarian model of dialectical meaning which suspends meaning, is in fact Right. Ray himself betrays, perhaps, certain personal affiliations with the work of Fish—which nevertheless is fully deconstructed and presented as the conservative side of a coin that has Barthes as its obverse. But Fish's gesture to the need for an institution, for certainty, for belief in belief, clearly evoke a responsive chord in Ray. He has, therefore, perhaps, some of Fish's refreshing ability to say things with clarity and force; with certainty. One leaves his book persuaded (a virtue of Fish: the persuasive) that the phenomenological speculations on meaning are the necessary background to an understanding of current literary criticism, and that an understanding is possible. But where, one still wants to ask, is the theoretical grounding for such confidence. How is it that one's gaze is directed to the illogicalities in the texts of Ingarden and others; theoretically how are such observations produced. If they are just there objectively, then Ray would align himself with one side of the dialectician. If they are the arbitrary selection of his intention to will a meaning, then he would be aligning himself arbitrarily and illogically on the other side.

Where then is the practise of dialectical meaning that is so theoretically praised in Ray's work? Can we really comfortably imagine him not only having witnessed the beast leap, the revolution arrive and undergo assimilation and naturalization, on the far side of irony comfortably smoking his pipe and smiling seraphically, hedonistically, at the playful production of ideas that may seem new under an old sun? On the surface of it his work offers no reason to believe that his own work does not violate in practise the theory it espouses.

Except perhaps for one thing. The history he writes is not a historicist history. He could't write it of course if Husserl, Ingarden, Iser and others didn't exist in a system of relations. And yet, as he says: "I must stress that I am not necessarily construing later literary theory to be a development of phenomenological thought . . ." So the history he traces does not have the authority of organic relation of part to part. It depends as much as anything else on his own 'intention' to see phenomenological categories as providing "the most powerful ordering principle for sorting through the many models of reading and criticism that have emerged. . . ." As one reads, however, one is given the sense of organic development in that Ray's argument and analyses are built around rhetorical connectives that make the chapter on one author seem the logical followup to the preceding one. But the rhetorical connections are logical, or grammatical, not historical. They are the connections of the evolution of a (Ray's) thought, and are not given by the historical occurrence of Ingarden, Sartre, Fish, deMan, even if one accidentally ordered the names in the way that Ray does. So the history here is literally the history of an idea, which is at the same time the idea of a history. So after all, Ray's work may indeed perform the very theoretical instability to which it directs our attention. And one cannot deny that there is pleasure to be had from his theoretical performance, and intellectual richness.

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Alan Kennedy

***The Elements of Chaucer's Troilus.* By Chauncey Wood. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984. Pp. xii, 204. \$35.00.**

Wood's book is Robertsonian in its approach, and has the strengths and weaknesses of a Robertsonian work. It grounds an analysis of the poem firmly on an investigation of the attitudes of the time in which it was written, and the attitudes to love held by writers such as Chaucer's own friend Gower, the creators of the *Roman de la rose*, a work that deeply influenced Chaucer, and Boccaccio, the author of Chaucer's source for the *Troilus, Il Filostrato*. One strength comes early in the book, in Wood's analysis of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and what Chaucer did not have to do to it in his adaptation. Wood points out that Boccaccio scholars have for a

long time (since the forties) rejected the idea of an historical Maria d'Aquino lying behind the Fiametta who was supposed to have inspired the *Filostrato*; as a consequence, the *Filostrato* itself is not to be read as a cynically Italianate celebration of courtly lust with a rather odd identification between the poet's beloved Maria and the faithless Criseida, but rather a poem that takes an ironic attitude towards carnal love, with a naive narrator who falls far short of the knowledge the poem offers. In short, Boccaccio's poem is far closer in its strategies to Chaucer's poem than Chaucer critics have been wont to recognize.

Like other Robertsonian readings of the poem, this one holds the *Troilus* to be ruthlessly *against* extra-marital lovemaking (as were Gower's, Guillaume de Lorris', Jean de Meun's, and Boccaccio's works), and *for* the love of God. What could be wrong with such a reading? The problem is that pushed to its extreme—and Wood pushes it there himself—it denies one of the two principal movements of the poem any importance. In the poem to the first book, Chaucer tells us that his poem is about the double sorrow of Troilus,

in lovyng of Criseyde,  
And how that she forsok hym er she deyde.  
(I, 55-6)

Wood's reading insists that the poem's sorrow—and significance—lies solely in the loving; as for the act for which Criseyde is remembered, her betrayal of Troilus in favour of sudden Diomedes, it is "no shocking infidelity": "Rather she breaks off an illicit relationship with one man to start a similar relationship with another. While breaking the vow is not a good thing, it is certainly not a sin, whether considered by the standards of courtly love or Christianity. Indeed, it isn't much of anything at all. Vows of fidelity and truth in illicit matters are not very meaningful to start with, and departure from them is, as Tatlock put it thirty-five years ago, 'trivial' " (p. 141).

While Criseyde is exonerated from her betrayal, Troilus is on the other hand condemned for his pride. No matter that the poem says that because of his love, "Pride . . . / He gan to fle, and everich other vice" (III, 1805-6): "The lover in the *Romaunt* is told to banish pride, and Troilus is said to have done so, which is merely a different artistic approach to the same joke: since pride is the general root of all harms or sins, and since carnal delight is a sin, it follows logically that a lover cannot be said to have banished pride. Indeed, since carnal love is linked with narcissistic, cupidinous self-love in medieval thought, one might aver that pride is a characteristic of lovers" (p. 84). Q.E.D. If lovers are narcissistic and cupidinous in medieval thought and if Chaucer thought medieval thought, then the lover Chaucer creates must illustrate narcissism and cupidity. If Troilus is said to be without pride, when according to the syllogism he must be proud, that is a joke. It is ironic. In fact, most of the poem is rich with such irony; only the "two very short, mostly direct statements that open and

close the poem” can be safely read straight, and the rest of it is a “lengthy ironic statement” (p. 97). Now Chaucer is certainly very often ironic, but is irony the only rhetorical figure at his disposal in examining the complexities of love? He was inarguably familiar with strategies such as oxymoron and paradox used by the contemporary Italian poets, and in fact adapts an oxymoronic Petrarchan sonnet to put in Troilus’s mouth in Book I. But the figure of oxymoron implies ambivalence, and Wood dismisses recent critical insistence on ambivalence in the poem, “simultaneous rejection and affirmation of the world,” thus: “When we do find a yoking together of opposites in medieval literature or criticism, as when Walter Map opens his letter to Ruffinus by saying he is forbidden to speak yet cannot keep silent, the effect is intended to be rhetorical rather than to display a genuine intellectual ambivalence” (p. 167). Leaving aside the question of the rigorous division between rhetorical effect and genuine intellectual ambivalence, let us simply observe the inadequacy of the example, a very simple opposition: being told to do one thing and feeling one must do another. That is different from feeling that one and the same concept has right and wrong elements, which can in theory be sharply distinguished, but in life are tangled and almost inseparable. See, for example, Langland on conscience, or the Gawain-poet on courtesy, or Chaucer on love.

There are two fatal flaws with Wood’s reading. One is the freedom with which the figure of irony must be invoked in order to support it. The other is the assumed consistency of medieval thought. Scholars such as Wood and his former teacher, D.W. Robertson, have done us all an invaluable service by their careful researches into the literature, art, philosophy, and theology of the Middle Ages. It is enormously useful to know from what point Chaucer began—what ideas he and his audience would have found familiar, what connections they would have made, what concepts certain images and metaphors would have invoked, such as the good and bad Venuses of Wood’s Chapter IV. What is not useful is to be restricted in one’s understanding of Chaucer’s work (or any great medieval poet’s work) to what the “medieval mind” could think. The “medieval mind” to me suggests the Parcae’s single eye: shared by all, passed around from one to the other, serving each equally well but none fully. But what if Chaucer had his own mind? What if, like Shakespeare or Dickens or Frost, he had a rich tradition to draw upon, and out of it he thought not only “medieval thought” (as they thought renaissance or Victorian or twentieth-century thought), but also his own thoughts? *The Elements of Chaucer’s Troilus* most usefully serves—and it is far from ignoble service—as a preface to the *Troilus*, rather than as a reading of the work Chaucer wrote.

***The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany.* By Vernon L. Lidtke. New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1985. Pp. x, 299. \$41.95.**

The Germany of Bismarck and William II, for all its threatening display of military strength and national power to the outside world, was in fact internally flawed by profound divisions among its constituent elements both political and social. Not only did the Empire harbour dissident minorities (Poles, Danes, Alsatians and Lorrainers) and even Germans, whether Hanoverian Guelphs or particularist Bavarians, alienated by the overwhelming predominance of Protestant Prussia. Imperial society was also characterized by a caste system which created numerous "states within the state": soldiers and bureaucrats, Catholics and the working class spent much of their lives each in a mutually exclusive, self-enclosed universe of their own design. Of these separate, but hardly equal, realms of work, leisure, loyalties, and rewards inhabited by distinct groups of German subjects, perhaps none was more all-encompassing than that of organized labour. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the Free Trade Unions affiliated with it, along with a plethora of voluntary associations spawned by both, shaped the daily existence of an increasing proportion of male workers (less so in the case of women) from cradle to grave to a degree that Bismarck's competing welfare state could not match. In the impressive range of its institutional structures German Social Democracy was the envy of all other European working-class movements before World War One.

Professor Vernon Lidtke, the author previously of a fine study of the SPD during the years from 1878 to 1890 when it was subjected to outright legal suppression at the instigation of the Iron Chancellor, has now published the first comprehensive monograph in any language on the movement's multifarious socio-cultural organizations and their activities. These clubs, whose interests ranged from sports (gymnastics, cycling, swimming) and especially singing to more "serious" pursuits such as stenography, chess, the study of esperanto and of religion (the so-called "Free Thinkers"), drew their membership largely but not exclusively from the ranks of the party and the unions with which they were more or less closely associated. On their own initiative the latter also sponsored educational programmes in special "higher" schools established for the purpose that were supplemented by lending libraries, public lectures, poetry readings, and theatrical performances. Sociability played a major rôle in most of these undertakings, which often enough had to be held in taverns for lack of any other available sites. Taken together, the author maintains, the extra-political activities of the organized elements of German labour shaped an "alternative culture" to that of the *Bürgertum* who in league with the aristocracy ruled the Second Reich, albeit with a steadily less confident and therefore more oppressive hand.

Of course, societal categorizations are never water-tight, and nothing the SPD engaged in could be completely divorced from politics at least in

the broader sense of the word. Thus the festivals regularly staged by its adherents, of which the most important was May Day, offered annual occasions to display the unity in diversity of the movement before the admiring, or worried, eyes of the police and the rest of the population. The mass parades staged in conjunction with these celebrations were accompanied by instrumental and choral music, and Professor Lidtke carefully analyses both the lyrics and melodies of these songs for their agitational content. Interestingly enough, the "Marseillaise" in several variations remained by far the most cherished tune among German workers before as well as after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71. Their preference for a foreign and "liberal" over a native socialist song points to a pattern of behaviour which persistently frustrated party intellectuals who sought to guide their untutored comrades in matters of the spirit: they chose to read not recommended weighty tomes of economics and social theory (eg. *Das Kapital* or indeed almost anything by Marx) but instead, like the bulk of their contemporaries, lighter tales of adventure and romance. A similar imperialism exercised by bourgeois culture, however, gripped the minds of better-educated Social Democrats too, the majority of whom were of middle-class origin. They could not conceive of a worthwhile autonomous workers' culture, and so they held up the socially reactionary Richard Wagner as exemplifying the epitome of artistic achievement. The cultural expression of socialist labour in imperial Germany was therefore eclectic rather than exclusive; it was self-contained but in its aspirations not narrowly parochial.

This book is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship on the social history of modern political mobilization. Although he somewhat slights the personalities involved in the athletic, musical, and paedagogical endeavours of the German labour movement (only a few SPD writers and critics are examined for their individual contributions to the creation of a distinctive proletarian literature), Professor Lidtke does transmit a sense of the widely diffused appeal which socialism in one manifestation or another enjoyed in pre-war Germany. This helps explain, indirectly, why to a greater extent than just about any other identifiable group the followers of Social Democracy were subsequently immune to the appeal of Nazism, at least as long as their party and its auxiliaries remained intact. That was one measure of the strength of their "alternative culture".

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***Atlantic Wildflowers.* Photographs by Wayne Barrett and Anne MacKay, text by Diane Griffin. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1984. Pp. viii, 136. \$19.50.**

Books dealing with wildflowers come in a spectrum of forms. They range from the authoritative but unreadable scientific 'flora', through the popular field guides, to a variety of picture books. This book fits in with the picturebook category but with some intriguing bits of information not ordinarily found in this format.

A four-page introduction which explains the scope of the book and some of the concepts dealt with leads directly into the main body of the book. From then on each page deals with a single wildflower or related group and has a standard layout consisting of a colour photograph at the top and text below. In all, 129 species are dealt with. At the end is a useful glossary of the limited number of technical terms used, a list of selected references and an index.

To a certain extent we have two separate books inside one cover. There are photographs by the husband and wife team of Wayne Barrett and Anne MacKay, and then there is the text of Diane Griffin. The two do not always agree.

The photographs are the most important component of the book; they set the tone and define what it will cover. This is not to denigrate the excellent notes of Diane Griffin, it is just that the photographs visually dominate and are what the eye is drawn to. It is this aspect that separates this book from the field guides.

How good then are the photographs? Well they vary. Some are superb, for example, the close-ups of the evening primrose, the iris, and chicory as well as the more general views of fields of lupins and tansy. Others are of various lesser degrees of success for reasons which include lighting (too harsh or too soft), choice of camera distance (often too distant), specimen selection or difficulties in printing. For instance the specimens of ragged fringed orchid and Canadian burnet are tattered, in fact the latter has a bad case of rust fungus, and should have been rejected. On the whole however the photography is good but shows signs of being rushed.

The text is quite comprehensive within an abbreviated style which consists of a list of 14 or 15 headings, each heading followed by anything from a single word to a couple of sentences. Within these restrictions there is an amazing range of information presented, from the common and scientific names and their Latin or Greek derivation to habitat, flowering time, conspicuous features, ecology uses, related species and references to scientific papers. The notes are both erudite and readable and are a happy attempt to make scientific information more accessible to the general public. Where the text meets the photographs there are a few downright clashes. Some of the plants are misidentified which is unforgivable in a book which has as one of its aims informing the public of the names of some of our common plants. These include *Callitriche*, water starwort, mislabelled as *Lemna minor*, duckweed; *Rubus hispidus*, dewberry, as *R.*

*odoratus*, flowering raspberry; *Rosa rugosa*, the Japanese dune rose, as *R. multiflora*; *Kalmia polifolia*, the bog laurel, as *K. angustifolia*, lamb-kill; *Primula mistassinica*, one of our rare pink primroses, as *P. laurentiana*, admittedly very closely related, and a few others such as the forget-me-not where the plant labelled *Myosotis scorpioides* could be the common *M. sylvatica*. In a few cases the names err on the cautious side with creeping buttercup, *Ranunculus repens*, simply labelled 'buttercup', not distinguishing it from our other common buttercups. This caution is a wise policy in the case of our many sedges, goldenrods and asters, although readers might be happy to know that the blue aster illustrated is *Aster novi-belgii*, the most common and conspicuous species of seaside and roadside gravels in the Atlantic Provinces. Typographical errors are few; I should mention only a couple of mangled scientific names which might escape detection: *Triglochis* and *Sisyrinchium montanum* have errors in them in the text.

Who then is the book aimed at? It does not displace any of the field guides to common plants such as the Peterson Guide or Newcomb's Wildflower Guide. One reason it cannot do this is that 129 wildflowers are not nearly enough. The book would need to cover probably 500 species to act as a reasonably comprehensive guide to the common flowers of the Atlantic Provinces. After all the flora of the region probably has nearly 3000 species in it. Thus the really keen amateur will need one of the older guides. But Atlantic Wildflowers will act as a useful supplement with its more luxurious use of space for photographs and comments. The other and most obvious use is as a gift. At \$19.95 with colour on every page, it is good value and can be recommended as a present for someone interested in the outdoors. It may not please every picky botanist but that is not its role. It is only a pity that more attention was not paid to editing and reviewing the text.

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