

Book Reviews

***Studies in Maritime Literary History, 1760-1930.* By Gwendolyn Davies. Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1991. Pp. 206. Paper, \$16.95.**

Although the Maritime Provinces have a literary history that is now over two centuries old, most of the pieces in this collection of Gwendolyn Davies's articles are evidence of a relatively recent trend—the investigation, in considerable breadth and depth, of the premodernist part of that history and the identification of its characteristic regional qualities. Before the publication in 1965 of the *Literary History of Canada*, with Fred Cogswell's chapters on maritime writing up to 1880, scholarly research and criticism on the subject were sporadic and mainly confined to a few well-known figures with unquestioned credentials, such as Haliburton, Roberts, and Carman. Over the last two decades or so, however, the pace of research has quickened. The old stalwarts have been reaffirmed by editions, collections of letters, and continuing critical examination; more writers—Goldsmith, Howe, McCulloch, DeMille—have been studied anew and planted firmly in the canon; and the distinctiveness of what Janice Keefer calls "the fundamental coherence of the Maritime ethos and vision" in its literature has been explored as never before, manifestly in her own study of Maritime fiction old and new, *Under Eastern Eyes* (1987), but also in a variety of shorter studies by other writers.

The industry and range of one of the most active of all investigators of the literary past of the Maritimes, Professor Davies, are well represented in this collection of her articles written over the last decade. Most of them first appeared in learned journals, in special collections of essays by various hands, or as book introductions. Since many readers are not likely to have seen them in their original contexts, their collection in one volume is welcome.

The diverse topics of the essays range chronologically from the 1760s to the 1920s. Only three essays, "Consolation to Distress: Loyalist Literary Activity in the Maritimes," "Persona in Planter Journals," and "Frank Parker Day's *Rockbound*," may be said to cover ground that has been much explored before. New emphases and fresh insights, however,

give distinction to the full-length article on the Loyalists; one should note in particular the discussion of Roger Viets's "Annapolis-Royal" (1788), of the pioneering periodical *The Nova-Scotia Magazine* (1789-92), and of the role of Loyalist women "in preserving and influencing standards of taste." Likewise, the piece on *Rockbound* makes good use of the Day Papers in the Dalhousie University Archives to bring out aspects of the novel of which the late Allan Bevan would not have been aware when he wrote his introduction to *Rockbound* in 1973, and the brief essay on Planter writers of journals (Simeon Perkins, John Seccombe, Mary Coy Bradley, and Henry Alline) focusses on the specific topic of self-revelation.

Other essays are on subjects that have been touched upon frequently by others but never examined at length in print—"The Club Paper: Haliburton's Literary Apprenticeship," an informative study of a series of satirical sketches appearing in Howe's *Novascotian* from 1828 to 1831, with emphasis on Haliburton's role in the venture; "James DeMille's *The Dodge Club* and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Travel Literature," which examines DeMille's travel book and compares it with prominent American examples of the genre, especially Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*; and "Penetrating into Scott's Field: The Covenanting Fiction of Thomas McCulloch," a discussion of a little-known side of the author of *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters* and of his difficulties with Scottish publishers.

Several more essays venture into truly unfamiliar corners of the Maritime literary past. "James Irving: Literature and Libel in Early Nova Scotia" relates the brief but lively career of Irving, a Scot who came to the province in 1819, as a literary critic and essayist in *The Acadian Recorder* of the 1820s and the unexpected victor in a libel suit brought against Edmund Ward, the pugnacious editor of *The Free Press*. "William Charles M'Kinnon: Cape Breton's Sir Walter Scott" is an account of the life and work of a North Sydney newspaperman, poet, and writer of historical romances whose journalistic and literary career in the 1840s and 1850s was succeeded by brief service as a Methodist clergyman before his early death from tuberculosis. "'Dearer Than His Dog': Literary Women in Pre-Confederation Nova Scotia" surveys a broad topic that has been much neglected, the literary activities of provincial women writers before 1867; Deborah Cottnam, Griselda Tonge, Mary Eliza Herbert, and

Mary Jane Katzmann are the main figures in an article which also addresses the larger subject of the woman writer in this particular Victorian society. "Sailing for the Goldfields: The Ballarat-Maritime Provinces Connection" explores the experiences of Maritimers in the Australian goldfields in the 1850s, as seen through the journals of Samuel Huyghue of Saint John and Jacob Crowell of Barrington. Finally, "The Song Fishermen: A Regional Poetry Celebration" is an account of a coterie of traditionalist Nova Scotian poets of the 1920s, a group missed by the standard histories of Canadian literature. Two brief essays on general topics complete the collection, "'A Past of Orchards': Rural Change in Maritime Literature Before Confederation" and "The 'Home' Place in Modern Maritime Literature."

It is difficult to generalize about such a varied collection except to say that these essays achieve a high standard of writing based upon diligent archival research. They demonstrate how forgotten or neglected aspects of our regional literature can be recovered and made part of the texture of an emerging pattern. As Professor Davies observes at the end of her Introduction, much more of this kind of "steering to our sources" remains to be done. Her collection is an excellent model for other voyers.

Petite Riviere, Nova Scotia

M. G. Parks

Mason Wade, Acadia and Quebec: The Perception of an Outsider.
 Edited by N. E. S. Griffiths and G. A. Rawlyk. Ottawa: Carleton UP,
 1991. Pp. 198. Paper, \$22.95.

This tribute to the late Mason Wade, historian and teacher, is a collection of articles both about and by the man, edited by two of Wade's admirers. Some of the material has already appeared elsewhere, while other sections are printed for the first time. Aside from honoring their friend and mentor, the editors had as their primary intention the desire to see in print the best of Wade's last work, a study of the Maritime Provinces, a manuscript left incomplete and unrevised at the time of his death.

The sections dealing with Wade's life and contribution to Canadian historiography are of far more interest and use than those written by Wade himself. Dr. Griffiths has contributed a detailed and sensitive

biographical sketch, explaining how this American became interested in the history of French Canada and rose to become such a respected figure in Canadian historical circles. Although written with obvious affection, there is no attempt to hide the flaws and shortcomings.

David M. L. Farr's contribution to the volume, an evaluation of Wade as a historian of Quebec, is not, on the whole, as successful as Griffiths's portrait of the man. A considerable amount of time is spent on the background to Wade's writing, especially French-Canadian historiography of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, Farr does not really relate Mason Wade very well to the context in which he wrote. It is not clear how Wade's interpretation of French-Canada's history either echoed or clashed with the nationalist school of thought in Quebec. It is as if the author has not quite decided what this chapter is about. Is the focus the historiography of Quebec, and especially the sins of the nationalist historians, or the role of Mason Wade in this, for the two rarely intersect?

In evaluating Wade's work, Farr concludes that *The French-Canadian Outlook* was, on balance, his best book. In doing so, however, he relates only what others thought of the book. One would like the author to tell us if it is indeed a perceptive, balanced and brilliant analysis of French-Canada. The assessment of Wade's other claim to fame, *The French Canadians*, includes both the opinions of contemporary reviewers and Farr's own critique of the book. Farr rightly attempts to place it within the context of its times, and defends it against the charges of not being what no history written in the 1950s could have been. In the end, however, Farr seems unfortunately intent upon showing that this "great sprawling mass of information," to use Arthur Lower's words, had little impact on the development of French-Canadian historiography. Since Wade had clearly pitched the book at a non-French audience, it might have been more productive to have explored more fully the role that it had in shaping English-Canadian perceptions of Quebec's history.

The concluding essay, by Stephen Kenny, is a reprint of an assessment of Wade which originally appeared in *American Review of Canadian Studies*. Kenny sees *The French Canadians* as Wade's most important book, although he presents little to indicate why he thinks this. He does attempt to grapple with what to him appears to be a perplexing question: why Wade's work is so little regarded today. Here he strives too hard for an answer, for he himself has already provided it. Having admitted that

Wade's work is derivative, simplistic, lacking in analysis and based largely on secondary sources, need Kenny look for more complex reasons for its disregard?

Approximately half of the book is taken up with Mason Wade's own writings, some being printed for the first time. These chapters deal with the Maritime Provinces, reflecting both the interests of the book's two editors and Wade's own preoccupations during the last two decades of his life. After an all-too-brief introduction by Rawlyk, five articles by Wade are presented, dealing with Acadia/Nova Scotia from its founding to the coming of the Loyalists. Here the weaknesses of Wade as a historian are all too apparent. As Rawlyk himself points out, they draw very heavily on the writings of others, especially John B. Brebner and Esther Clark Wright. Although researched and written in the 1960s and 1970s, they show remarkably little awareness of what was being produced in the field during this time. Surprisingly, they do not reflect a knowledge of the work even of Griffiths and Rawlyk, two historians Wade both knew well and admired. Appearing in print in the 1990s, they appear hopelessly dated, completely out of touch with Maritime historiography and apparently unaware of this fact. Of serious analytical history there is very little. Even a careful reading of Wright should have made Wade aware that one cannot say that "much of the history of the Loyalists can be illustrated by the career of Edward Winslow . . ." (140) and then proceed to try to do it. Over all, it is difficult to accept the editors' view that these articles are worthy of publication, even as the final products of the pen of a once-influential historian.

In the end, this is a rather sad book, filled with the unexpressed wishes of the writers that Mason Wade had been a better historian than he was, that the early promise had come to something more. It is clear from the book why Wade had his brief moment in the sun, but also why he went into such sudden and complete eclipse, why Wade was read so extensively by my generation of university students, and by the present generation scarcely at all. Mason Wade was clearly more skilled at building enduring friendships and intense loyalty than he was at writing good analytical history.

***Red Tory Blues: A Political Memoir.* By the Hon. Heath Macquarrie. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992. Pp. ix, 378. \$35.00.**

Senator Heath Macquarrie has given us a fine personal memoir of his life in politics. He invites us to join him in his own political odyssey, from the hot July night in 1930 when as an eleven-year-old in rural Prince Edward Island he listened spellbound to his first all-candidates' debate, right up to the traumas of the recent Triple-E Senate negotiations.

While the title, *Red Tory Blues*, captures the author's somewhat left-leaning (for a conservative) outlook on public issues, a better one might have been "Heath's Excellent Adventure in the Land of Politics." For this book is not an ideological tract at all, but the story of how an intelligent and observant young boy got hooked for life on "the great game." Macquarrie is fascinated as much by the plays and the players as by the ideologies of the game. Although a keen supporter of his own team, like a true sportsman he is generous towards his opponents both in victory and defeat, and is always respectful of the referees who call the play, the voters.

There is a lot of the young Heath in the elder statesman and author of today. It is his still youthful enthusiasm that steers this essentially self-directed tale between the Scylla of sentimentality and the Charybdis of excessive partisanship; that, and the sometimes impish delight he takes in the characters and doings of his associates and opponents. Macquarrie's keen eye makes the reader feel he must have jotted down the details surreptitiously in writers' notebooks as they happened, from childhood on, planning all along to write this book.

In fact, Macquarrie's gift is larger than that of chronicler of the passing scene. He writes easily and well, a talent—how can I say this politely?—not always shared by his fellow politicians. He has a nice turn of phrase, and if his aphorisms often originate from pre-war rural P.E.I., they are always apt and, to younger readers, even fresh. Like this one, à propos Diefenbaker's "northern campaign of 1958": "The Liberals, naturally, sought to belittle all that 'vision' stuff but, as Lucy Maud Montgomery might have put it, they should have saved their breath to cool their porridge." And, on Pearson's TV performance in the same campaign (quoting a colleague): "He sounds just like Foster Hewitt when the Leafs are losing."

Macquarrie began his career as a university professor, a calling not often associated with practising politicians, particularly Tory ones. After an undergraduate degree at United College in Winnipeg, where he met his wife Isabel (later a professor of mathematics), he served at various times on the faculties of the University of New Brunswick, McGill and Brandon College in Manitoba. But clearly Macquarrie's first love was not scholarship for its own sake, but politics. At United College, he was prime minister of the student model parliament, with Sterling Lyon one of his "ministers." At UNB he worked in the back rooms, as he did at Brandon where he went in 1951 to take up the faculty position vacated by the legendary prairie conservative Walter Dinsdale on his election to Parliament. While there he served as president of the Manitoba P.C. association when Duff Roblin became party leader. In 1955, with Dinsdale's help, Macquarrie was elected third vice president of the national party.

As luck would have it, in 1955-56 he was in Ottawa doing research at the National Archives on his PhD thesis, the career of Sir Robert Borden. He never completed it. As with so many other Tories—Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney come to mind—the infamous pipeline debate of May and June, 1956, blasted pure oxygen onto the faintly glowing embers of Macquarrie's political ambition. Within months, he had secured the nomination as a P.C. candidate for the dual constituency of Queens in his native P.E.I.

"It would be inaccurate to say I was being drafted," says Macquarrie, and certainly he worked hard for his first nomination, as he did in his eight general election campaigns from 1957 to 1974. The fact that he won all eight says everything about his abilities as a constituency representative: he was one of the best. And for the political buff, one of the great pleasures of Macquarrie's book is to be immersed in the daily life of the working politician.

Macquarrie does not ignore the larger scene either. We meet all the great and the near great of the Tory and other parties coast to coast over sixty years, just as Macquarrie knew them—John Diefenbaker, Leon Balcer, Thane Campbell, and his favorite, Robert Stanfield—to pick only four, and to say nothing of those still on the playing field. While there are few disclosures of previously unknown facts, Macquarrie, by putting on record his strictly personal account of people and events, contributes much to our understanding. (One—to me astounding—revelation is that

Mackenzie King had sought to join Borden's wartime Union government. Macquarrie learned this from Arthur Meighen, who got it from Borden.)

Ideologically, Macquarrie is at pains to press the Red Tory viewpoint. For him, the foundation of the modern Progressive Conservative party's success was laid at the Port Hope Conference of 1942. Thoroughly frightened by the CCF—who had just defeated Meighen in the York South by-election which was to have been his road back to the national leadership—the organizers' purpose was to move the party to the left in the hope of luring lost sheep back into the fold. At Port Hope the party committed itself to "a kind of every citizen's charter." The state would assume responsibility "to see to it that every citizen is provided with employment at a wage which will enable him to live in decency," with generous social welfare programs for those who couldn't make it on their own. At every opportunity, Macquarrie pushes this view. Indeed the book's title is intended to signal the author's worry that the party today is becoming too right wing.

There is an oddity about the author's treatment of his ideological views, in both the domestic and the international fields. Although trained as an academic, Macquarrie does not try to vindicate his principles by much analysis. He can't see any social benefit in the new market-oriented political culture sweeping the world. He doesn't address the state of near bankruptcy to which past profligacy in public spending has led, let alone offer solutions. He doesn't even address the argument that his beloved social programs are at grave risk if governments don't tackle the deficit issue head on. While Macquarrie's compassion for the underdog is obviously heartfelt, and while one can agree with his central theme about the purpose of government—to help those most in need—the author's decision to stake out his ground without detailed analysis renders his thesis less persuasive than it could be.

In the international field, in which Macquarrie has long experience, there is regrettably much in this book that smacks of unexamined leftist sentimentality. How else to explain Macquarrie's near eulogy of Fidel Castro's Cuba and Maurice Bishop's Grenada, and his belief—in 1966!—that "a sensible accommodation between East and West was valuable"? And only someone who has fallen completely out of touch with Russian sentiment today could "find it difficult to be enthusiastic about the idea of Leningrad again becoming St. Petersburg." But Macquarrie's dedication to the "victimized people" of Palestine, almost

unique and quite courageous in the context of Canadian politics, is well treated, even if it would take a lot more convincing to put this reviewer in the PLO camp alongside Macquarrie.

In the end, one is left with the feeling that Macquarrie entered active politics not primarily to do all the things that politicians do, but to observe the passing scene and influence it through force of mind and heart. But most ambitious politicians want to do more; they want to wield power directly. Macquarrie never speaks of any such desire on his part. In spite of his undoubted abilities he never achieved Cabinet rank; yet there is no hint of regret, or even a recognition that his political career may have missed something. Instead, the book exudes a virtually audible sigh of relief upon the author's call in 1979 to the Senate, a chamber which quintessentially lacks power but which Macquarrie holds "is a more effective and compatible place than the House of Commons."

But lack of hard-edged ambition is not necessarily a fault, even in a politician. Macquarrie's devoted constituents got excellent service, undiluted by other cares. His colleagues on all sides of Parliament like the "merry monk from Hillsborough" (Eric Kierans's sobriquet), and receive his views with respect. And readers of this book have the privilege of observing the exercise of political power through the detached and thoughtful gaze of a humorous and good-hearted scholar who loves the game.

One great joy shines like a beacon throughout Macquarrie's book: the author's devotion to his wife Isabel, who has supported him fully throughout his career.

On the technical side, the book is well put together, with good, readable type and no typographical errors. The publisher might, however, have chosen a better picture of Macquarrie for the dust jacket. In full highland dress, complete with bonnet, sporran and elfin smile, the author looks as if he had just stepped out of an advertisement for Scottish shortbread.

Heath Macquarrie is an example of the best our country has to offer to public service. If his memoirs inspire other young people to follow the path he took in 1930, he will feel a personal sense of quiet satisfaction, and Canada will be all the better for this book.

***History: Politics or Culture? Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt.* By Felix Gilbert. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990. Pp. x, 109. \$14.95.**

Felix Gilbert, who died recently, was one of the brightest stars among the constellation of emigrés who left Europe in the 1930s and early 1940s for political reasons. Like several of these (Paul Oskar Kristeller and the late Hans Baron, for instance), he was principally a scholar of the Renaissance, but like any "Renaissance man" had broader interests: intellectual history, diplomatic history, and historiography were among the topics he explored in a long and influential career. His 1961 essay on early American foreign policy, *To the Farewell Address*, won the Bancroft prize for history, and his *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* (1965) remains one of the best works on the interplay between history and politics during the late Florentine Renaissance. Gilbert's career began with a study of the controversial German historian and philosopher of history, Johann Gustav Droysen, so it is fitting that this, his last book, should be devoted to mature reflections on two other of the most important German-speaking historians of the nineteenth century, Leopold von Ranke and Jacob Burckhardt.

This brief volume eschews a general review of either of the two historians' careers or writings for a focused examination of the treatment of "politics" by Ranke and of *kultur* (which some might feel translated more readily into "civilization" than "culture") by his one-time student, Burckhardt; but it also goes some way towards bridging the gap between them. Ranke was a died-in-the-wool conservative, committed to the state bureaucracy and the niche he had carved out for himself therein; he was equally devoted to the idea that the culmination of God's plan for humanity, the end of history, lay in the hegemony of the great nation-state in post-Napoleonic Europe. Burckhardt, a liberal (initially) and much more a sceptic, was the more original of the two thinkers. He was also more quixotic: the revolutions of the 1840s would drive him to a political position further to the right than his former teacher. Both were prolific (Ranke in parenthood as much as letters); if Ranke is still cited as the father of modern historical method (not least by Gilbert in this volume), Burckhardt may in fact have exercised as much influence on the *style* of historical writing in the twentieth century. It is at least true to say that Burckhardt—whose *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (still virtually

compulsory for any serious work on that subject) is often reprinted—is more often read closely than Ranke, whose interpretations of history have worn less well, even if his principals of research survive.

Gilbert presented a substantial portion of the Burckhardt material at a plenary session of the Renaissance Society of America in 1985. This reviewer recalls the occasion as a pleasure. Like the original lecture, the book is gracefully written and free of jargon, and will be a useful addition to any library of intellectual history. That said, a few reservations must be noted. The book has been carelessly proofread for a product of the Princeton University Press. More seriously, Professor Gilbert apparently had no opportunity to familiarize himself with some recent critical work on both of his subjects. One might reasonably expect some attention to the work of Hayden White, whose 1973 book *Metahistory* dealt at length with the rhetorical and poetic structure of both Ranke's and Burckhardt's major works; this is all the more surprising since Gilbert is far from oblivious to the critical role of style and presentation in the fashioning of historical masterpieces: his *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* is indeed a model of how to integrate such studies into a political narrative. Similarly, I find his enthusiasm for Ranke's contribution strangely over-effusive; it does not (even more surprisingly, given Gilbert's command of the Renaissance material) acknowledge that the "modern" critical study of documents did not originate with nineteenth-century Germans like Ranke and the classicist Barthold Niebuhr, but much earlier, in the philologists of the Italian and French Renaissance; Ranke's immensely important contribution was the professionalization of the historical discipline, and the establishment of principles for gathering and criticizing evidence as a standard for all students of the subject. He may in fact have proved more influential through his dominance of the research seminars over which he presided, than through his myriad writings. The recent book by Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1988), which appeared too late for Professor Gilbert to take it into account, has made all too plain the degree to which Ranke's famous formulation of history as the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen* was misunderstood by his disciples, especially in the USA.

Perhaps the most suggestive chapter is the final one, connecting Ranke to Burckhardt, challenging a dichotomy between political and cultural history. This opens with a reference to Friedrich Meinecke, the early

twentieth-century historical master who in many ways served as a bridge between the Europe of Ranke and that of Gilbert himself. This is an excellent "farewell address"; one only wishes the speaker had been allotted more time.

Dalhousie University

D. R. Woolf

***Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark.* By Rodney Stenning Edgecombe. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1990. Pp. 165. Bibliography and Index. \$22.50.**

***In Search of Stevie Smith.* Edited by Sanford Sternlicht. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1991. Pp. 227. Bibliography, illustrations, index. \$27.50. Paper, \$15.95.**

Two recent books take quite different approaches to two British women writers of this century, each in her own way a witty and precise observer of human beings as social animals. In *Search of Stevie Smith* is a collection of critical essays, reviews, interviews and illustrations, edited by Sanford Sternlicht, who has also written a recent study of the poet and novelist (*Stevie Smith*, Boston: Twayne, 1990). Rodney Stenning Edgecombe's *Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark* is, as its more straightforward title implies, more conventional literary criticism. Arguably, the latter is the more ambitious and scholarly work; however, the former is undeniably more entertaining.

The title of Sternlicht's book teases the reader; once through these essays, only the novice will feel he or she has actually "found" Smith. Most of the material was published several years ago and all is available elsewhere; only the introductions were written especially for this volume. So this is not a revaluation; rather, it is a mostly affectionate but generally fair portrait, according to its editor as much intended for fans as for scholars,

as the guidebook to a world where animals are always good and people seldom, where angels try to understand humans instead of vice versa, where little girls are older and wiser than their mothers, where men are insufficient and women never learn that fact, where friendships are not

fun and loneliness is the steady companion, where God is androgynous when He is at Her best, and where Death is humankind's best pal. In other words, here is the Baedeker to Stevieland.

Sternlicht obviously intends his guidebook to be impressive in its representation of both creative and critical communities, though the reader who really wants to learn what Terry Eagleton or Muriel Spark think of Stevie Smith, will discover that their comments are confined to brief notices. The division of material into interviews and treatments of novels, poetry and the canon is useful, though the book should be read as a whole, so that the wonderful comments that stand out (such as Philip Larkin's that Smith's poems "have two virtues: they are completely original, and now and again they are moving") might transcend the sum of their parts. This book makes the most of Stevie Smith's more notorious eccentricities through interviews and reminiscences: she becomes vividly real in the odd juxtapositions of her little-girl voice and attire and her preoccupation with death, of the modernism of her literary style and her rejection of much modernism, of the scope of her allusions in her writing and the primitive simplicity of the line drawings which often accompany her poems. As well, it provides a range of commentary on and opinions of her work; I find especially useful Martin Pumphrey's examination of the poetry in terms of play theory and the plurality of voices ("Play, Fantasy, and Strange Laughter: Stevie Smith's Uncomfortable Poetry"). The book's chief virtue is that it makes the reader want to search still further, especially by reading more of Stevie Smith's works themselves.

Muriel Spark said of Stevie Smith's collection of poems *Not Waving But Drowning* that its main theme "is that life is fairly deplorable and yet must be praised," a view not incompatible with the outlook in much of Spark's own work. The title of Edgecombe's study is somewhat misleading; his treatment of the fiction is more or less limited to five of the twenty-odd novels Muriel Spark has produced. Hence, while his analyses have what seems like an exhaustive depth, the book is not as comprehensive as one might like. There is a reason for this: Edgecombe's premise is grounded in an evaluative sort of criticism. He feels that Spark's first ventures as a poet, and her conversion to Roman Catholicism, influence an interest in vocation throughout her work and an epigrammatic neatness in the earlier, more dogmatic works: "The

unemotive spareness of the Christian creeds and catechisms, by virtue of similar qualities, might also be said to bear an epigrammatic relation to the body of dogma they represent, and they are quoted by Spark at crucial nodes of her stories to bring the contingent detail of the narrative into the focus of the divine 'epigrams' that underpin them." To Edgecombe, Spark's later fiction is degenerative with its loss in the post-Vatican Council II era of clearly codified moral certainties, and with her growing tendency to choose almost always as characters the idle rich:

If writers plan to satirize futility, they need sturdier moral equipment than graceful cynicism. Satire requires passion if it is to sustain its corrective power. A Juvenal consumed with *saeva indignatio* might have engendered some sort of momentum as he led us through Spark's internationalist valley of the shadow of death, but Spark is no Juvenal. Essentially Horatian in her light, dismissive procedures, she often flags at her task. At their worst, the books read like valueless trifling. Indeed, the erasure of the Catholic dimension, hitherto the guarantor of high seriousness, gives to some the flavour of blasphemous parody.

I would have preferred Edgecombe to condense his discussion of the five representative novels (*The Bachelors*, *The Girls of Slender Means*, *The Mandelbaum Gate*, *The Abbess of Crewe* and *The Takeover*), and provide a more detailed sense of their context: a more rigorous treatment of the early, dogmatic works, and a clearer tracing of the degenerative process. His emphasis leads to too much quotation and plot summary on the one hand, and belaboring of fairly small details on the other. As well, he overlooks almost entirely Spark's frequent use of humor. However, *Vocation and Identity* is interesting, if problematic, in its disputation of humanist criticism of the way Spark's ideological position works in her narratives. This analysis (which refuses to concede any artistic growth in the later novels) provides a useful, if conservative, approach, and might invite contention on the part of those who would see it as an intriguing and valid, if perhaps limited, approach to Muriel Spark's fiction.

White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa. By J. M. Coetzee. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988. Pp. 193. \$22.50. Paper, \$11.95.

It is not cheering or easy to reconcile the author of some of the most exciting and wrenching fiction of recent years with the careful academic who produced this book of essays. Certainly the essays have their value, and they supply criticisms and readings of much neglected and misread South African white writing. But they are somewhat off-puttingly and self-consciously postmodernist, larded with snazzy phrases like "poetics of blood," which sounds good, but ends up meaning what we have always known as racial theory. And yet, while he loves the sound of the new or the neo, he also is amongst the most cautious and careful writers of academic prose one is likely to find, scrupulous almost to a fault. One longs, in reading this book, for some of the vibrations and earthquakes Coetzee can set off in his fiction. His critical tact can also be questionable, as when he writes in an essay on Sarah Gertrude Millin, "It is a mistake to ask whether Millin is for or against the attitudes toward genetic inheritance that make it impossible for Barry to live a normal life with this English wife in South Africa: or at least it is a procedural error to ask the question too soon" (140). We may be forgiven for wondering what this overprecise legalese means, and whether, in art—or life—it is ever a mistake to ask a question.

Nevertheless, despite its rather heavy-handed solemnity of purpose, the book possesses real value for those who wish to understand the culture of the white settlers of South Africa in their historical, political and cultural contexts. *White Writing* is Coetzee's attempt to give a context to those works of white South Africans that have shaped the white South African—English and Afrikaans—political culture. He is a storehouse of information and knowledge of the works that have shaped white thinking, and, in addition, has a rather ostentatiously capacious familiarity with the nineteenth-century European traditions which informed the sometimes too-receptive and willing white writers of South Africa. He uses his familiarity with the more recent theorists, especially the French, fairly tactfully and always usefully, and manages to supply a kind of post-modernist cast to his mostly critical-historical essays. Though, with his fascination with these writers, the book becomes rather weighty with

phrases like "the Discourse of the Cape" that ends up sounding better than it means.

The flagship essay of the book, "Idleness in South Africa" is also, in some ways, the least satisfying. On the one hand it is an audacious and serious attempt to write the history of Cape colonialism around those terms which have invaded and transformed the concept of racism. On the other, and less successfully, Coetzee rather arbitrarily chooses idleness as his touchstone of cultural differentiation when, virtually by his own admission, he might as well have chosen a plethora of other criteria as frequently and characteristically deployed through the literature of his white European exemplars. The essay makes the fascinating point that idleness became the identifying mark of racial inferiority of the inhabitants of the Cape, of the non-white people and the Afrikaans settlers alike. The taint of idleness became, to the white minds which constructed it, the index of the inferiority of the peoples whom the dominant culture and political authority determined to oppress. The white conception of black idleness was used to justify oppression of the Hottentots, whose perceived characteristics permeated the white way of thinking, writing about, and seeing them. The Hottentots were perceived from a white perspective as idle, smelly, incestuous, promiscuous, improvident, etc. It is Coetzee's contention that it was their perceived idleness above all that determined for the whites the *difference* of the Hottentots and smoothed the way to their subjugation and eventual extermination. For me, one of the problems with this interesting argument—and it is a problem one keeps encountering in the essay—is the fact that idleness, by Coetzee's own criteria and references, is merely one of the categories of debility with which the whites branded the Hottentots. Their odoriferousness, for example, or their sexual permissiveness seem to loom as largely in the argument as their idleness, and, one feels, could as convincingly have been documented and levelled against them as their propensity to lie in the sun and do nothing. What is truly fascinating about the essay is the way the author places the white war against the Hottentot people of South Africa in the context of the ferocious European war on the beggars and how notions of the South African indigenous people were imported into the language and culture of European settlers in a characteristic travesty. It is intriguing to see how the idleness of the Boers does not create the same crisis of recognition for the writers on idleness. The question of

whether black idleness is prelapsarian innocence or evidence of depravity is tackled when the habit of indolence begins to be noticed amongst the Boers whose idleness is directly proportional to their use of the non-white people for their easy way of life. The crime of capitalism, both early and present, looms large in most of the essays of the book as one of the compelling sources of the evil of racism.

A major contribution to South African English cultural studies made by *White Writing* is the long overdue inclusion of Afrikaans writing as one of the many shaping phenomena of South African cultures of race and racism. Coetzee's essay on the Afrikaans writer, C. M. van den Heever, truly the D. H. Lawrence of South Africa, with his equally ludicrous blood consciousness, goes a long way to explaining and describing the deep vein of sentimentality in Afrikaans culture and the bond to the land as an almost preconscious feature of that culture. His essay on the outrageous racial writing of the Jewish writer Sarah Gertrude Millin establishes the literary and historical contexts for the ballyhoo that white culture was for too long willing to accept as scientific, with its roots in Zola and the Goncourts. Millin's importation of these Realist theories into the South African context engraved these notions in the granite of High Art. It may be suggested that white South Africa has never recovered.

There are interesting essays on various other themes. All are subversive and radical in the best senses of those words. And though I began with a qualification, by which I stand, the pieces that make up *White Writing* supply a refreshing and vigorous means of entry to South African culture.

York University

Derek Cohen

C. K. Ogden: a bio-bibliographic study. By W. Terrence Gordon. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1990. Pp. ix, 156. \$22.50.

C. K. Ogden has always remained an enigmatic figure. His contributions to the study of aesthetics and the philosophy of language seem to be overshadowed by the reputation of his colleague and co-author, I. A. Richards. The generation of scholars at Cambridge University who were

his young contemporaries—William Empson, F. R. Leavis, E. M. W. Tillyard—developed literary and cultural studies in a direction away from Ogden's speculative, philosophical investigations. His project for disseminating a simplified, accessible method of teaching English, which was immensely successful during the 1930s, floundered after the Second World War. W. Terrence Gordon's book, *C. K. Ogden: a bibliographic study*, is therefore a welcome resource for those who wish to know more about this mysterious but obviously influential figure.

No reader of Gordon's study can fail to be impressed by breadth and variety of Ogden's interests. He was the co-author with I. A. Richards of *The Meaning of Meaning* and with Richards and James Wood of *The Foundations of Aesthetics*, a book which mapped out new terrain for the study of language and the emergent discipline of English literature; he wrote two substantial studies of Jeremy Bentham; he was the translator of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; he was an editor of *The Cambridge Magazine*, of *Psyche*, and of five series of books published by Kegan Paul; he invented Basic English and wrote over a dozen commentaries promoting it. His edition of Bentham's *Theory of Legislation* continues to be a standard text, and his translation of Wittgenstein has survived controversies to be reissued many times by Cambridge University Press. Still, it is reasonable, given Ogden's obscurity, to ask where the continuing significance of this remarkably prolific oeuvre lies. In my view, Gordon's study suggests that it might be located in the early philosophical speculations on language and in the ambitious development of Basic English.

The Meaning of Meaning, published in 1922, takes shape from the tradition of British empiricism and bears the marks of Ogden's lifelong interest in Bentham. Language, according to Ogden and Richards, functions best if its resources are deployed clearly and precisely. Yet it would not be correct to conclude that such a utilitarian view reduces language to a one-dimensional instrument. Quite the contrary: meaning emerges from a complex interaction of grammar, logic and reference. It is this emphasis on context and referentiality which distinguishes their linguistic model from the autonomous, self-contained structure of language in Saussure's semiotics. But if Saussurian linguistics has seemed to be more influential and prestigious in contemporary discussions, it is worth reminding ourselves that the issues of reference and context—so

conveniently bracketed in the structural paradigm—continue to be of vexing concern to literary and cultural critics. Ogden's research in the mid 1920s took him in a quite different direction with the invention of Basic English, a teaching method which had as its essential elements an accessible vocabulary of 850 words (400 monosyllables), together with a summary of rules for combining words and constructing sentences. It ought to be emphasized that Basic was never intended as the end point of a student's mastery of English; rather, it was hoped that the system would give non-English speakers a simple functioning grasp of the language which would be easy and gratifying to learn. By the end of the 1930s Basic had been adopted as a teaching tool by governments and educational institutions on several continents. Of special importance was the comprehensive project undertaken by the Chinese government, a decision no doubt influenced by I. A. Richards's commitment to teaching in China. While it is difficult to assess the Basic English projects without considering them in the context of colonial and neo-colonial domination by English-speaking countries, it is also true that the dynamic underlying Ogden's invention of the system springs from his ongoing concern with communication. Like *The Meaning of Meaning* Basic English sought to explore ways in which language might become a more facilitating form of communication.

Gordon has compiled an extensive bibliography of Ogden's writings and commentaries on them which will prove to be useful not only to scholars of Ogden but to anyone interested in that productive period of intellectual inquiry following World War I. It might have been appropriate to include some of the recent scholarship that touches on Ogden's work. Anyone interested in Basic English, for instance, would benefit from reading the relevant chapter in John Paul Russo's *I. A. Richards: His Life and Work*. Still, there is no doubt that Gordon has produced a comprehensive book on a fascinating, and neglected, figure in British modernist intellectual life.