

## Book Reviews

*The Young Vincent Massey.* By Claude Bissell. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1981. Pp. xii, 270. \$22.50.

Give all thy day to dreaming and all thy night to sleep:  
Let not ambition's tyger devour contentment's sheep.

That from the corpus of English poetry and prose Vincent Massey should have selected Flecker's couplet to adorn a fireplace in the country house he reconstructed during the late 1920s as a base for the Masseys' manifold and far-flung operations is deliciously ironic. Its sentiment, as Claude Bissell observes in his finely crafted and penetrating biography of the gifted pair (Massey's life and personality receive most attention but those of his helpmate are justly rendered too), mocks "the constant drive of both Alice and Vincent to occupy positions of more and more responsibility and conspicuousness" (153). Mackenzie King fixed upon the inscription a balefully emulous gaze when visiting Batterwood House in 1934 to consult about the election campaign Massey was then managing for the Liberals; King vented in his diary splenetic comments on his host's "self-seeking and lack of consideration... The warning against ambition could be an admission of its constant presence. In King's mind the abstract quality was personified, and Massey emerged as an 'ambitious tyger'" (232).

However much powered by ambition, the Massey career as this first of two volumes leaves it at age forty-eight had already won enough laurels for any elder statesman. (Bissell's depiction of a "young Maecenas" aptly invites comparison with the Roman whose combination of energetic civic virtue and hedonistic private life contemporaries admired and envied.) A two-page chronology is required—and provided—merely to list highlights. Thus in 1919 he presides at the first meeting of the Massey Foundation, he establishes a commission on secondary schools and colleges of the Methodist Church, he opens Hart House. Thus in 1925 he is appointed trustee of the National Gallery, he enters the Liberal cabinet, he resigns as president of the Massey-Harris Company, he is defeated in the riding of Durham. Thus in 1931 he declines the presidency of Dalhousie University, he is deprived of the presidency of the University of Toronto (on which, as

Alice wrote, he had set his " 'whole heart' "). On the balance of this oh-so-busy life, Bissell passes judgment: "All these activities—in music, drama, painting, education, and in what was to be known as the mass media—had to be combined with a pre-eminent commitment to diplomacy and politics. They no doubt constituted a relief from a world reverberating with the clashes between men obsessively bent upon power. But for Vincent they justified the hours spent on the business of the nation. In politics he was broker, consultant, at best a frustrated leader; in the arts and education he was originator, director, publicist, critic, and, occasionally, practitioner, as well as patron" (195).

If fame is possibly the spur to this career, theatre is almost certainly its key. For Vincent Massey, all the world's a stage: the world of diplomacy, in which he dons its costumes with relish, plays its stylized rituals like the accomplished actor he is (better than Raymond in some critics' view), declaims with elocutionary effect the set-piece monologues of state; the world of politics, enabling his talents as impresario to be effectively deployed; the private world of Batterwood, where charades and pantomimes and home-made movies are the household's entertainment; the world of theatre itself. "His diary, from its beginning in 1908 through the next two decades, is a record of theatre activity in the English-speaking world" (62). "...Vincent was a complete theatre man" (65). Space was made in the sub-basement underneath the quadrangle of Hart House, and the first of Canada's "little theatres", its creator sometimes on the boards and as often as possible in the audience, began its lasting impact upon dramatic arts.

But for the outstanding example of Massey's skill as patron Bissell selects the Hart House String Quartet (described by the philistine Mackenzie King as " 'an interesting orchestra of 4 pieces' "), for which he provided "unifying force", dealing "sympathetically with a long succession of personal crises and administrative obstructions". The Quartet in return helped him realize his hope to "correct the impression of a Canada immersed in wheat, pulp and politics" (177-8). A Quartet member inadvertently pierced the Massey's mask of imperturbability worn as protection against snide carpers at their conspicuous displays of good works. Harry Adaskin had declined to accept a fee for violin lessons for their son, explaining to them that "no one could ever repay them for their efforts on behalf of art, music and the theatre in Canada". In Adaskin's own account (quoted by Bissell), an affecting sequel ensued: "Mrs. Massey burst into a flood of tears. Her husband put his arms around her shoulder and tried to soothe her spirit. She couldn't speak at first, but since she couldn't stop crying, yet wanted to say something, she spoke through her tears. 'No one's ever, ever said anything like that to us, have they, Vincent? Have they? No one's ever said anything like that.'" (177). The Masseys early on encountered the unlovely Canadian trait of putting down the excellent among us.

Bissell's biography sets its subject firmly and deftly in its times and places, traces and analyzes its ideas and attitudes with skill and deep yet

unobtrusive learning. Massey's defection from Methodism (culminating in 1926 in confirmation by—one is tempted to say of course—the Archbishop of Canterbury) was aesthetic rather than doctrinal in its motivation: Anglican liturgy and architecture were more appealing than severe sermons in austere chapels. His Anglophilia has more complex origins. "Nowhere was the worship of England and Oxford more pure and intense than in the university's history department" (39); Vincent, as the protégé of George Wrong and his team of Oxonian imports at Toronto, developed Balliolmania before setting foot in the place. Two years at Balliol—"a brief golden age" (99)—fortified these feelings, as did a certain flaw of character detected by William Grant (the husband of Alice's younger sister and Massey's mentor): "The one defect of himself and his wife is that they are extremely accessible to subtle and well bred flattery by anyone whom they regard as an intellectual equal, more especially if the flatterer has a title" (163). A further explanation (which Bissell doesn't offer) for the survival unscathed of Massey's high regard for all things English if well placed may be that, unlike most Canadian men of his generation, he did not experience directly the appalling consequences of the higher direction of the Great War by British politicians and generals; and he was not, therefore, prone to its survivors' often bitter disillusion with the leadership of Empire.

Massey's attitude toward the United States, from whence his forebears emigrated and to which he became Canada's first minister, is examined in a chapter on "The American Years". More might be learned at "The House of Truth"—the Washington salon where the likes of Felix Frankfurter, Herbert Croly and Walter Lippmann gathered "for lively and uninhibited search for sound philosophical and political principles"—than at Balliol, and Massey there imbibed the best in American critical and progressive thought (132). Such tonic reprieves atoned for the Babbitry of Coolidge America too often encountered on the lecture circuit, where the penalty for speaking for Canada was enduring many "a sycophantic eulogy of rapid turnover and large profits..." (134). But speak for Canada he did, and when he left his post in 1930 Lippmann wrote: "No one in the history of the two countries has done so much to make plain to the willing but often careless minds of Americans that Canada is a great nation, a prime and individual factor in the politics of the world." On this encomium Bissell comments: "No diplomat could have had a more satisfying pronouncement on his work, or wished for a eulogist of greater eloquence and authority" (145). And no young Maccenas for a biographer of greater eloquence and authority.

*A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft 1929-68.* By J. L. Granatstein. Deneau, 1981. pp. xv, 488. \$24.95.

Hockey fans apart, Canadians seem to have no need for heroes and if Ken Taylor is counted as really an American hero, public servants would have to be the least likely of candidates. Yet Professor Granatstein in this biography of Norman Robertson has imbued his subject with qualities of heroism, including a touch of *hamartia*.

NAR, as Robertson was known to those in "The Department" who were not close enough to call him Norman, had filled every important job in the Public Service open to one of his training and talents and he did most of them before he was fifty. Moreover he was called into prominence in wartime, without having angled for preferment and without the psychological preparation that comes from working one's way up. And that is not all. His position, at least with Mr. MacKenzie King was unique; no other public servant ever had, or is likely to have, a comparable position — virtually an unelected foreign minister.

All this is conveyed in scholarly detail and very readable English by Professor Granatstein. Although it would seem that there was a conscious effort not to let the personality of the subject get in the way of his story, there is at the end, a strong impression of unfulfillment; of a genius never fully used, a sage unconsulted.

The book can be read at three levels, the biographical, the political, and the historical, and at each it is fascinating and informative. In each Robertson emerges not only as an influence on events, but also a reflector of other prevailing influences not all of them consonant with his own. For instance, in the matter of the economic relationship with the United States it is possible to trace, through Robertson's involvement, the evolution of Canadian thinking from something close to continentalism to what is now being called economic nationalism.

Although he rarely criticizes his subject for his lapses from libertarian standards, the author is obviously concerned about them and goes to some pains to explain or comment on the occasions in which NAR's position seemed to be less than pure. Illiberal actions at the time of the Gouzenko affair, the expulsion of the Japanese from the Vancouver area, the question of having nuclear weapons in Canada, all prompt Professor Granatstein to apply to NAR the standards that would normally be applied to a politician, and he seems to suggest that Robertson could have acted according to his own preferences if he had really wanted to. But even given his unusual position, NAR was and remained to the end a proposer, not a disposer. MacKenzie King, in one part of his diary quoted in the book, complains about "one of the mistakes our bureaucracy continually makes, taking for granted that Ministers will simply follow what they suggest." Robertson, as a public servant, knew what the market would bear and that he had the choice of accepting the parameters within which he could influence decisions or of seeking other employment. The price of having influence is to give acceptable advice.

Another fascinating thread in the book comes from the central part Robertson played in the rather rapid (historically speaking) movement of Canada from being seen, at least abroad, as a state under British influence to one under American influence. His appointments as Undersecretary for External Affairs, High Commissioner in London and Ambassador in Washington covered the period during which this transition was completed and Professor Granatstein has documented the process in terms of trade negotiations (bilateral and in GATT) and in political terms; the right to be consulted, to have one's identity acknowledged and not taken for granted. It became a central problem for Canadian diplomacy that the infuriating patronage of London was replaced by the equally infuriating but potentially more dangerous patronage of Washington.

Alongside the British/American linkages comes the Canadian search for a distinctive place in the community of nations based on its performance of various "functions" of international significance. Immediately after the war, Canada was, in functional terms, something very like a Great Power. The policy was to try to have this established internationally and although the policy went through many vicissitudes, it is interesting to note that this approach, born of MacKenzie King and midwived by NAR, has been playing an increasing role in Canada's dealings with the outside world.

There is one more area of special interest in which Robertson's influence is still being felt, the character of the Department of External Affairs and what it would like to regard as the style of its better people. Professor Granatstein attests, worse still he documents, the administrative disarray over which NAR presided. The filing system was so bad that it was largely ignored as individuals compiled collections of documents for their own purposes. (I once found in the Registry index a file entitled "International Situation - Generally". It contained a single document concerning Britain's declaration of war on Rumania.) These weaknesses in the administrative area, to say the least, undermined any imperial aspirations External may have had to take over all of Canada's foreign operations. They did not, however, hamper the department's ability to establish its intellectual leadership in those areas. There are those who claim that there is an inverse relationship between administrative efficiency and intellectual activity.

The Robertson heritage was clearly on the intellectual side. Consciously or not, NAR's immediate successors sought to keep alive in the department the "ethos of duty, high competence and intelligence" that Professor Granatstein attributes to him and his close colleagues. Under Robertson's dispensation his style and attitudes, sometimes described as "proverty, chastity and obedience" left their mark on people he either never knew or knew only slightly.

L. B. Pearson and N.A. Robertson have often been compared, but they represent two quite different traditions within the Canadian Foreign Service. One opted for power rather than mere influence, the other was content to have influence as a career public servant. In retrospect, the

Pearson model has been of little relevance beyond those who regard the Foreign Service as a stepping stone to other things. Whether NAR ever realized his potential as an advisor of governments or not, he certainly left behind him a large number of people in the Department of External Affairs with a high sense of duty and high aspirations to competence—even in administration.

Apart from its contributions to Canadian historical and political studies, this book is a record of what it is that makes a great public servant, a statescraftsman to match the statesman. Canada has been fortunate in having servants who found satisfaction in what ignorant people tend to think of as an inglorious occupation. We are also fortunate in having a scholar who has documented some of those achievements so effectively.

*University of King's College*

*Arthur Andrew*

*Medicine in Canadian Society. Historical Perspectives.* Edited by S. E. D. Shortt. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981. Pp. 506. \$23.95.

To comment upon this collection of nineteen essays, virtually all of which have appeared elsewhere, is to remark upon the state of Canadian medical historiography. As Professor Shortt points out in his opening essay, "Antiquarians and Amateurs: Reflections on the Writing of Medical History in Canada," the history of medicine in Canada is characterized by an undue emphasis on the heroic medical personality and a whiggish preoccupation with modern medicine's progressive triumph over epidemic disease. For the most part the essays in this collection avoid such romanticism and attempt, with varying degrees of sophistication, to locate medical history in its broader social context. Indeed, while the social history of medicine is in its infancy in Canada there are indications in the recent literature that the field is groping towards maturity.

Because of its comprehensive character and its emphasis on the relationship of medicine to the broader community, this book will likely become a standard introduction to Canadian medical history. The essays in the collection not only touch upon every region in the country from the Maritimes to the Arctic, but range over the entire landscape of medical history as well. The topics dealt with include the transmission patterns of epidemic diseases; the impact of epidemic disease upon doctors, victims, and the public health systems; the nineteenth century debate over medical licensing; the changing nature of medical attendance; and the emergence over the past century of the modern medical and public health bureaucracy.

The most engaging essays in the book are those that at once probe the attitudes of the nineteenth and early twentieth century towards the disease process, sexuality, birth control, abortion, insanity, and the role of women in medicine, and explore the professional and therapeutic implica-

tions of those beliefs. The picture that emerges is not that of a confident profession eagerly promoting scientific discovery in order to insulate the new social order from its morbid past, but instead of a profession struggling to come to terms with modernity and constrained by the limitations of its own professional and social understanding. Such an interpretation, of course, implies the need to understand how prevailing social attitudes or the popular *mentalité* shaped professional consciousness and behaviour. The essays by Charles Roland, Veronica Strong-Boag, Daniel Francis, Thomas Brown, Geoffrey Bilson, Neil Sutherland, and Angus MacLaren represent a step in this direction. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done to illustrate and define the relationship of popular ideology to professional behaviour in Canada.

The extent to which the profession was unable to escape either its past or present is revealed both in the debate over Lister's antiseptic procedures and in the changing attitudes towards the insane in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this regard the essays by Roland, Francis, and Brown are particularly useful. Charles Roland approaches the debate over Listerism through a series of biographical sketches. At one level he deals with opponents of Lister such as William Canniff whose assault on antiseptics involved a vested interest in the interpretation of inflammation contained in his own medical textbook. Throughout his career Canniff remained a determined foe of the germ theory. More interesting is his treatment of those doctors at another level who failed to recognize the extent to which Lister's experiments challenged traditional explanations of the origins of disease. Some of the latter even resorted to carbolic acid as a remedy rather than an antiseptic. It is a pity that Roland did not spend more time investigating this theme. The extent to which proponents of antiseptic theory departed from antiseptics in practice reveals the extent to which doctors were unable to disentangle themselves from their past.

In his article on the lunatic asylum in the nineteenth century Maritimes, Daniel Francis deals with changing attitudes toward the treatment of the insane. He outlines the faith of the 1840s and 1850s in "moral treatment", in which the correct blend of work, play, and worship would restore self-discipline and self-control to the inmate. By the end of the century, he argues, this faith was shattered. In the long run the asylum became "more a jail than a hospital". While this is an interesting point, Francis unfortunately gives too little attention to the reasons for and nature of this change. Thomas Brown (whose essay is unquestionably the finest in the book) brings changing attitudes toward insanity into much clearer focus. In his treatment of the Canadian career of the analyst Ernest Jones, Brown outlines the extent to which Freudian psychoanalysis threatened nineteenth century sexual morality and prevailing psychological and neurological orthodoxies. In arguing that sexual repression caused many existing neuroses, Freudians like Jones challenged the prevailing assumption (ably described in the article by Michael Bliss) that sexual restraint conserved the energy needed for more creative activity. In addition Freud-

ians discounted the role of heredity in cases of insanity and attacked the somatic notion that mental disorders were a function of brain lesions. Seen in a broader social perspective, Freudian psychology threatened a Victorian intellectual nexus that contributed greatly to social stability and control. Furthermore, the generally negative reaction of Canadian psychiatrists to Jones's crusade in support of Freudian principles reveals the essentially conservative presumptions of the profession in early twentieth century Canada.

That doctors were not likely to provide a significant challenge to the existing social system is hardly surprising. Throughout the nineteenth century they were concerned largely with securing their professional authority at the expense of their competitors. In our century their efforts have resulted in the establishment of a medical bureaucracy that preserves and defends an elevated social status. As Geoffrey Bilson, Barbara Tunis, and Hilda Neatby demonstrate, the early attempts to define the limits of the profession emerged against a backdrop of public suspicion and political disputation. Bilson discusses the impact of cholera upon the Canadian medical profession during the first half of the nineteenth century, and shows how the failure to understand the disease — evident in the debate among doctors as to whether it was contagious or epidemic — undermined public confidence in a profession already badly divided and challenged by irregular practitioners and charlatans. This is a familiar story. Unfortunately, Bilson provides little information about those offering alternative forms of medical treatment. Indeed, the emphasis upon orthodox practitioners which characterizes Canadian medical history leaves us with too little knowledge of the underside of medical treatment in Canada.

However that may be, by the end of the 19th century doctors had made significant advances in cultivating public support and in developing a new and less vulnerable professional profile. Margaret Andrews' statistical analysis of medical attendance in Vancouver, for example, suggests that doctor-patient relationships assumed a more professional and less personal character in the period 1886-1920. Andrews does not say so, but it is likely that a more formalized mode of medical attendance added to a doctor's professional mystique and enhanced the power of his professional monopoly. Equally important was the expansion of the public health bureaucracy that accompanied the bacteriological era and the progressive reform impulse. Neil Sutherland outlines the efforts of turn-of-the-century reformers to establish "a strong and healthy race" and their systematic attempts to improve the health of children through a program of public health in the schools. Terry Copp relates the development of public health in Montreal to the unfortunate circumstances of the working classes, including high infant mortality rates, impure milk and water, inadequate nutrition, and insanitary living conditions. And Janice P. Dickin McGinnis demonstrates how the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 encouraged postwar reform of the health system. Although Sutherland and Copp both refer to the widespread resistance to public health initiatives, especially with regard to compulsory vaccination, there is little



doubt that improvements in public health helped secure the status of the medical profession in the modern social order.

At the turn of the century many doctors were looking with increasing favour at the prospect of a closer union of the medical profession and the state. It was obvious to many that a medical bureaucracy incorporated into the machinery of state could be useful to the profession, as long as doctors controlled its operation. It is not surprising, therefore, as Robert Bothwell and John English have shown, that in the years immediately following World War One there was little opposition to a state run system of medical health insurance. Indeed, if disease prevention was of concern to the state and useful to the profession, could not the same be true for health care? The campaign for health care insurance waned in the 1920s, revived in the Depression years, and bore fruit after the War. The result of the modern bureaucratization of health care has been to secure the professional monopoly of doctors and to insulate them from popular movements for medical reform.

Popular opposition to the initiatives of the professional medical establishment is an interesting phenomenon, and one that deserves more attention than it receives in this collection. Why was there so much popular resistance to the medical profession in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? In what ways, moreover, can the tension between popular consciousness and the professional impulse be tested? Angus MacLaren touches upon these questions in his excellent essay "Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920." Noting the unwillingness of the medical profession to confront the existing social sanctions against birth control, MacLaren shows how declining fertility rates at the end of the nineteenth century revealed the desire of women to control their own fertility rather than to accept it passively. Women turned to various aborti-faciens, irregular practitioners, abortionists, and quacks who provided alternatives to unwanted pregnancy. Their actions reveal that the established profession could not escape the constraints of prevailing Victorian morality, and that doctors often failed to provide what many women considered necessary medical services. Nor was the inflexibility of the profession likely to be challenged by women practitioners. As Veronica Strong-Boag points out, women practitioners in the nineteenth century failed to transcend the "cult of domesticity," interpreting their medical role in terms of woman's unique nurturing instinct. This essentially conservative vision of woman's place in the profession and the social system, moreover, was quite compatible with the outlook of a professional elite more concerned with establishing and maintaining its social hegemony and status than with significant social change.

Insofar as this book provides a collection of essays which attempt to locate medical history in its social setting, it is a useful and successful collection. At the same time, however, it points to the obvious limitations of our present understanding of medical history in Canada. Two themes are in particular need of attention: 1) the process of medical professionalization in Canada and the extent to which a scientific or monopolistic

impulse predominated in this movement, and 2) the nature of alternative or unorthodox medical practice in Canada and the extent of popular resistance to the activities of the regular medical profession. Hopefully historians of Canadian medicine will soon turn their attention to these questions. In so doing they will be building upon the foundations laid by the contributors to this very useful volume.

*Saint Mary's University*

*Colin Howell*

*The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's 'Final Solution'*. By Walter Laqueur. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980. Pp. 262. \$12.95 US.

Since 1963, when Rolf Hochhuth's dramatic indictment of the passivity of Pope Pius XII in the face of the destruction of European Jewry was first staged (*The Deputy*), historians and publicists alike have increasingly directed their attention to what may be termed the non-Nazi components of the appalling tragedy of the Holocaust. In addition to the Vatican, the policies adopted by Hitler's principal opponents, as well as by neutral, satellite and conquered states more or less subject to his will, towards the persecuted Jews in the Third and later the "Greater German" Reich have come under relentless investigation. In the case of Great Britain and the United States, but also Sweden, Switzerland, Fascist Italy, Vichy France, the Netherlands and now Canada, research has concentrated for the most part on the general failure of these and other countries to offer havens sufficient to absorb the mounting flood of refugees from Nazism. The explanations advanced for the indifference, and in some cases outright hostility, shown by most of the surrounding world to these hapless victims of racial madness have ranged from endemic anti-Semitism through persistent economic dislocation as a result of the Great Depression to considerations of high political and military strategy: for example, British concern to restrict Jewish immigration into their Mandate Territory of Palestine in order to preserve Arab good-will in the Middle East and the single-minded determination of the U.S. to defeat Hitler militarily without diverting scarce resources to supposedly secondary objectives such as rescuing Jews. Not even Jewish leaders, themselves often in the end murdered by the Nazis, have escaped critical scrutiny for alleged complicity in the deaths of their six million co-religionists.

Crucial in determining the degree of responsibility which others must bear for facilitating the Nazi plan to wipe out the Jewish population of Europe is the matter of knowledge: *who knew what and when* about the so-called "Final Solution" as its horrible dimensions unfolded? Professor Walter Laqueur, Director of the Institute of Contemporary History in London and author of numerous studies of twentieth century German, Jewish and current world history (terrorism, guerrilla movements, etc.), has

attempted the first systematic — although still not comprehensive — answer to these deceptively complex questions. Confining his research chiefly to the eighteen months following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 when the wholesale killing of Jews first got underway, he has uncovered a startling quantity of data on the sources, routes and timing by which information about Nazi genocide being perpetrated in the east reached western Europe and beyond. Notwithstanding fitful attempts to keep the murderous activity secret (in particular by employing aesopian language — “resettlement”, “deportation”, “special treatment” — to describe it), reports first of mass shootings of Jews of all ages by mobile police killing-squads (the so-called *Einsatzgruppen*) and subsequently of the establishment and functioning of stationary death camps began to circulate among the public and were brought to the attention of political leaders all over the continent. Soldiers on leave, railway workers, Roman Catholic clergymen, journalists from neutral countries, the Polish underground, escapees from the clutches of the Nazis — these and many other agents transmitted a steadily accumulating body of detailed evidence about the fate that had befallen Jews in Hitler’s Europe. Much of this news spread as rumour, but some was in fact published in the press despite various forms of censorship. Yet it was nearly the end of 1942, by which time authentic accounts of the murder factory at Auschwitz had leaked out and at least three million Jews were already dead, before even the Zionist leadership in Palestine was prepared to acknowledge the truth of what had been learned. This disbelief, Professor Laqueur maintains, stemmed not only from concrete historical experiences, such as the atrocity tales about German misdeeds in Belgium spread by Allied propaganda during World War I which afterwards proved embarrassingly exaggerated, as well as from glaring inaccuracies in some of the accounts received (one had former world boxing champion Max Schmeling as the commandant of Auschwitz!), but also from deep-seated psychological inhibitions. He quotes tellingly the maxim of La Rochefoucauld: “*Le soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder fixement* (It is impossible to stare continuously at the sun or at death)” — least of all at killing on the scale and by the means with which it was being carried out in Poland and Russia. Did this not perhaps portend that European civilization itself was on the verge of obliteration?

Although the author was not able to secure access to all of the archival sources he would have liked and his study consequently has a somewhat patchwork quality to it (very little is said, for instance, about knowledge among the Soviet leadership of the massacre of Jews taking place on their own soil), there can be little doubt of the essential accuracy of his conclusion that by January 1943 the objective, methods and extent of Nazi extermination policy *vis-à-vis* European Jewry were substantially known in Geneva and Stockholm, in Rome and Jerusalem, in London and Washington. Professor Laqueur is not concerned in this book with the responses this knowledge provoked — or, more accurately, failed to arouse — among its recipients. However, he does explode several myths

and misconceptions which still attach to the subject of the Holocaust (a term, incidentally, to which he strongly objects on semantic grounds). Thus he affirms that the bodies of the victims were not processed into soap as was frequently reported and that the record of the Polish government-in-exile in publicizing information it obtained about the murder of its Jewish fellow-citizens was better than that of most other Allied states. A few points of fact and interpretation, though, need to be amplified. While it is true that no written order from Hitler to destroy the Jews of Europe has survived the collapse of Nazi Germany, or may indeed ever have been issued, contrary to Professor Laqueur's assertion (p. 196) precisely such a document backdated to September 1, 1939, initiating the so-called "euthanasia programme" among physically and mentally handicapped "aryan" Germans — an important step on the way to the "final solution" of the Jewish question — does bear the Führer's own signature. Furthermore, the unvarnished "public opinion" reports of Heinrich Himmler's Security Service did uncover quite accurate rumours circulating among the German populace about the ultimate fate of the Jews as early as the spring of 1942; nonetheless one may doubt the accuracy of the author's assumption that by the end of that year "millions in Germany *knew* that the Jewish question had been radically solved" (pp. 30 ff. — emphases added). As in the case of others who learned of the "terrible secret", many Germans, too, were incapable of believing — that, is facing up to — the truth they had discovered. Finally, in an account otherwise notable for its restraint in passing judgement on the behaviour of the many onlookers to the Holocaust, Professor Laqueur condemns the leadership of the World Jewish Congress and American Jewry, in particular Nahum Goldmann and Rabbi Stephen Wise, for their "ineptitude" and inaction in the face of events (pp. 158 ff., 186). But could not profound grief just as effectively cripple the will somehow to combat what was happening as did fear, indifference or assent? "When all allowances have been made, when all mitigating circumstances have been accorded, it is still true that few come out of the story unblemished."

*Dalhousie University*

*Lawrence D. Stokes*

*The Moral Meaning of Revolution.* By Jon P. Gunnemann. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979.

This book might more properly be titled *The Religious Meaning of Revolution*, for Gunnemann actually avoids offering a clear moral interpretation of revolution, but does include some practical advice to churches, particularly Protestant churches, about their relations to revolutionary activity. Further, he believes that revolutions are essentially religious in character and can be best understood as a kind of religious experience: "Revolutions are religious events" (p. 40). From this perspec-

tive, most of the book consists of criticism of some aspects of the theories of revolution to be found in millenarian movements, Hegel, Marx, and Jurgen Moltmann.

Gunnemann's own view of revolution is that it is very similar to religious conversion, in that it involves a dramatic change of world view, i.e. perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour. He views revolutions as not just political and economic events, but more deeply as epistemic and moral transformations. His interest in the moral problem of revolutions arises from the sharpness of the transformation. Since revolution seems to him to involve a shift in perceptions about the source of evil in a society, the groundwork of assumptions about good and evil shifts and takes with it the framework for moral judgment. Moral norms must shift along with the social understanding about the basis of evil, making objective moral judgments impossible because the tools of measurement change.

Gunnemann has been very strongly influenced by Thomas Kuhn, and he believes that political revolutions are actually very like the analogous scientific revolutions Kuhn describes. Here, the metaphor comes full-circle. Kuhn found it useful to use the notion of political revolution to describe key features in the progress of science; Gunnemann finds the Kuhnian model ideal to identify the historical phases of political revolution. Gunnemann believes that each society is predicated on a particular view or paradigm about the nature of evil (theodicy). On his view, revolutions are generated by the knowledge of increasing number of anomalies which arise for that paradigm, even as ever more effort is expended to make the ruling paradigm work. At a certain point, the anomalies become overwhelming and new paradigms emerge offering varying degrees of explanatory power for the suffering in that society. A struggle between paradigms results, followed in successful revolutions by the dominance of a new one with the accompanying changes in world view, particularly in the "methods and vocabulary in ethics" (p. 241).

He repeatedly stresses the claim that the error in most approaches to revolution is the mistaken belief that evil can be overcome when in fact it can only be reconstructed. Revolutionary fervor should perhaps be tempered by this knowledge. Further, it turns out in the final chapter that the shift in paradigms of evil accompanying moral concepts is not complete after all, and translation is possible between views. He sees the proper role of the church to be one of assuming the job of translation and, where possible, improvements in the workings of existing institutions so as to make revolution unnecessary. The possibility of revolution, he believes, is the impetus for social and political change towards justice. If the church succeeds in pointing out injustice and ways to correct it within the structure, sudden revolution will be unnecessary. It is certainly not inevitable.

The major difficulty I have with the book is the lack of empirical support he offers. He claims to be offering a theory of revolution as it is actually experienced and criticizes other writers for neglecting history, yet he makes no reference to particular revolutions at all. He does not demonstrate his conceptual analysis with actual examples. It is not even

clear from his definition (a revolt that involves transformation of consciousness) which historical examples he takes to be revolutions, since there are widely varying degrees of transformation. If a new paradigm solution to the problem of evil is a necessary component, what were the pre- and post-revolutionary paradigms in particular revolutions? Surely he ought to offer some evidence in support of this theory, especially since simple power struggles are inadequate to constitute a revolution on Gunnemann's model. At the same time, he seems to over-simplify the experience of revolution in other directions. Surely revolutions are primarily social and political phenomena. The religious metaphor of conversion is a metaphor and does not seem sensitive to the complexities in motivation to revolution. For instance, as a feminist I am interested in a transformation of consciousness with regard to sex roles. I am not sure I can adequately express my concerns in terms of evil. By identifying sexism as morally wrong according to accepted norms of justice, I am not persuaded it is best construed as a new form of evil rather than irrational prejudice. In any event, I surely do not believe sexism is the only source of evil. I am uncertain whether achieving a society free of sexism would constitute a revolution on Gunnemann's terms, and, if it did, at what point the transformation can be said to occur, if the process continues to be slow and gradual and non-violent. The theory does not seem adequate to comment upon such real-life concerns.

*Dalhousie University*

*Susan Sherwin*

*Poems 1912-1944.* By Eugene O'Neill. Ed. by Donald Gallup. New Haven and New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1980. Pp. vii, 119. \$9.95.

The poems collected here offer three aspects of O'Neill: the young satirist writing for newspaper publication, the mature man in love, and the horizon-haunted wanderer familiar to readers of his plays.

O'Neill's problems with language in his plays are well documented, and the plays of his middle period in which he experimented with "poetry" in dialogue are his least successful efforts—*Lazarus Laughed* and *Marco Millions* come immediately to mind. As he demonstrated in his early sea plays and in his final major works, O'Neill's language was most truly poetic when it arose not from a self-conscious desire to heighten language but, rather, when it utilized and refined ordinary speech, structuring and texturing it to achieve the immediacy and impact of true poetry.

The same situation exists in the poems. One or two of them dealing with the sea possess that same immediacy and have an intrinsic value of their own. The love poems, whether addressed to Beatrice Ashe or to Carlotta Monterey, are interesting only in a biographical sense. The earliest of the love lyrics are greeting-card sentimental; the late ones addressed to Carlotta are laboured in a mistaken equation between flatness and simplicity.

The early satirical poems are trivial, interesting only by comparison with the way O'Neill described them in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Indeed, to resurrect these poems is as unfair as the publication of those early plays he wished to have destroyed, and in *Long Day's Journey* O'Neill provided the most obvious and best criticism of his early poems. When Tyrone says to Edmund: "There's the makings of a poet in you," Edmund replies: "The *makings* of a poet . . . I just stammered. That's the best I'll ever do . . . stammering is the native eloquence of us fog people" (p. 154).

O'Neill's true poetic sense was theatrical rather than linguistic, and only in those dramatic passages where he dealt with the sea did his language truly burst the bonds of prose. The poems here collected, and his comments on them cited in the introduction, serve to demonstrate the same point. It is another irony in the O'Neill canon that he himself was sharply aware of his linguistic limitations, and the poems are at most a clumsy footnote to his literary career.

Dalhousie University

Robert Merritt

*Looking For Peace*. By R. L. Barth. Florence, Kentucky: Robert L. Barth Press, 1981. Pp. 53. Paper, \$3.25.

When a newly established small press begins by publishing good work in an important but neglected area of writing, we should feel grateful and expectant. The Robert L. Barth press ought, therefore, to interest many, since the first volume of its poetry series is a fine collection of formal verse.

The title accurately points to two related themes in the collection: the human desire for a point of stability within the world's flux, and the truth that no such point exists except as the tentative summation of a previous effort to understand something of that flux. The first section consists of three adaptations, from Thomas More, Horace, and Catullus, and seven original poems. The latter consider various failed searches, as that of the tavern confessor seeking peace in false intimacy, or that of the man who believes surrender to the pull of chaos is peace. In two adaptations one figure gives advice to another about the search. Gently More chides a nervous friend in debt:

So, be my friend and let the money slide,  
Or be my friend and pay me: you decide.  
Should neither of these two arrangements find you  
Amenable, just pay me. Then I'll unbind you.

The third adaptation, "Catullus 46," finds tentative repose in travel.

Of fifteen epigrams in the second section, three or four owe more than they ought in phrasing to past masters. But Barth's matter is substantial enough to compensate, and several are eminently repeatable. The epigram

is a dangerous form to use, for it reveals unmercifully whether the poet has anything worthwhile on his mind.

The third section is a sequence of love poems from the poet to his wife, centering on a physical separation. It is quiet and charming, avoiding crude neuroticism and finding in the intensities of mutual desire one kind of peace.

The finest poems, however, come in a final sequence on the Vietnam War. Here the main themes receive their most complex treatment. Two poems are, for me, at the centre of the sequence. "The Insert" describes the transfer of a reconnaissance group from hovering helicopter to clearing to jungle. The description creates a sense of constricted immediacy of time and place. The whipping grass and the chopper's roar, intensifying the silence and immobility of the nearby jungle, evoke a moment terrifying in its possibilities. Yet the poem suggests that to lose that feeling of terror in which there is no peace, or to begin craving it are equally dangerous. The final lines ("The terror of the insert's quickly over./ Too quickly... And more quickly every time...") point to the inverse relationship between terror felt and the closeness of death: the time when the insert is not terrifying is the time one will die, spiritually and, perhaps, physically.

"A Letter from the Bush" considers the uneasy peace that the soldier in the jungle can attain. It moves, again, from description to comment. The final half-line is not ironic; it is plain statement:

We've learned that decay traces  
Trails, clearings, even faces  
In ambush. It is good.

As will be clear, the sequence is neither fashionably anti-war nor simply anecdotal. Theme and treatment are serious and intelligent. But Barth has not exhausted his subject, and the poems, fine as they are, suggest also that some of his best remain to be written. The book, then, is a good start for Barth's press. I read with pleasure that his second publication will be *To Be Plain: Translations from Greek, Latin, French, and German* by Raymond Oliver. Two such volumes together at the beginning of a series ought to encourage poets and readers alike, since the continuing existence of the press will be a measure of the health of that community.

Stanford University

James M. Young



*William Faulkner: His Life and Work.* By David Minter. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. Pp. xxi, 325. \$16.95.

*Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Comedy.* By Lyall H. Powers. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980. Pp. x, 285. \$18.50.

Ever since the publication in 1974 of Joseph Blotner's commodious and comprehensive biography of Faulkner, Faulkner studies have needed a more condensed version of the writer's life that would balance a rehearsal of background facts with critical assessment of imaginative creations. David Minter's aim in his *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* is admirable: to sketch the "'mysterious armature' . . . that binds Faulkner's life and art together." This is an awesome task, and occasionally Minter achieves what he set out to do, as in some of his discussions of the psychic significance for Faulkner of Caddy Compson and the book she spawned. The genesis of *The Sound and the Fury*—particularly Faulkner's recollection that the novel grew out of an image of three little boys staring up at the muddy seat of their sister's drawers while she gazes down from her perch in a pear tree on their grandmother's funeral—cries out for some sort of psychological analysis.

Minter seems to have genuine feeling for *The Sound and the Fury*, but his critical procedure fails him when he attempts too close an equation between Faulkner and some of the author's heroes—or worse, between another author's fictional recreation of Faulkner and Quentin Compson. This methodology, employing fiction as biographical evidence, treads a fine line, and in Minter's hands it sometimes becomes, like the tautological rhetoric he frequently employs, an overly neat and finally insubstantial way of dealing with a terrifically complex subject. The subtle interdependence of Faulkner's life and art is not well served by oblique and inaccurate statements like the following: "The novel [*The Sound and the Fury*] thus focuses not only on the three brothers Faulkner possessed when he began but also on Caddy, the figure he added to memory—which is to say, on the only child whose story he never directly told as well as on those whose stories he directly tells." Other technical problems further blunt Minter's argument: the use of "portmanteau" footnotes that sometimes make it impossible to match a quotation with its source, citation of incorrect publication dates, and poor editing/proofreading that leads not just to misspellings, but to mistakes like the substitution of "Greenhill" for the name of Faulkner's property, Greenfield Farm, and of "The Green Bough" for Faulkner's 1933 volume of poetry, *A Green Bough*.

Despite these demurrers, Minter's book does enlarge upon Blotner and in this sense makes a contribution to Faulkner scholarship. In contrast, Lyall H. Powers' *Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Comedy*, with its emphasis on the Yoknapatawpha "Saga," seems a throwback. Powers' thesis is that Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction, taken together, is informed with a moral, even theological, pattern of optimism, which the critic describes as having two main themes and an attendant third: "The Self-Destructiveness

of Evil," the "Theme of the Second Chance" (also called the "Quo Vadis Theme"), and the Arnoldian theme of the "Saving Remnant." This approach is more than a little schematic, and it gives rise to some curious omissions. Powers does not discuss *Knight's Gambit*, or indeed any of the Yoknapatawpha short fiction. In overlooking Faulkner's prodigious output in this genre, Powers is following what seems to be time-honored tradition in Faulkner criticism. However, his rationale for using *Sartoris* rather than the more authoritative version of this novel, *Flags in the Dust*, reveals a disconcerting unwillingness to relinquish long-cherished—and outdated—attitudes: "Whether all this additional information makes *Flags* a superior novel is debatable, a matter of taste. . . . Excision [in *Sartoris*] of Horace's affair with Belle's sister seems to me distinctly to improve the work, since involvement with an additional affair is out of character for the Horace we meet again in *Sanctuary*. . . ."

One does not wish, perhaps, to argue with Powers' attempt to reconcile the disparities that exist between Faulkner's works. But Powers' approach to this vexed topic is far too rigid; he strictly adheres to a limited focus and therefore ignores what is probably the best supporting evidence for his thesis, *A Fable*, the book Faulkner hoped would be his "magnum o." Superimposing the concerns of one Faulkner work on another is always, however, an unsatisfactory procedure, as is Powers' attempt to shape Faulkner's career to fit the sentiments of the Nobel Prize speech. Faulkner's work does possess remarkable integrity, but one mark of its genius is its steadfast resistance to conformity.

Detroit

Lisa Paddock

*The Exploded Form: the Modernist Novel in America.* By James M. Mellard. Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1980, ix - xiii, 208 pages. \$18.75.

This is another contribution to the great debate about the so-called post-modernist novel. James Mellard makes a worthwhile addition to this debate by putting it all in a historical context. He claims, quite rightly I think, that "the history of the modernist novel in America, in short, is the history of that seemingly ever-accelerating movement away from the exploding centre of the traditional form." Using the astronomical model of the exploding universe, he maintains that the detonation is still going on. Therefore, he contends, we are still in the modern phase of the novel, although he sees signs of a transition towards another epoch already taking place.

Using in part the critical theory of Northrop Frye, he posits three phases for the developing modern novel: naive, critical, and sophisticated. As exemplars of each of these phases he discusses Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Heller's *Catch 22* and Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in Amer-*

ica. Faulkner experimented with form and style in *The Sound and the Fury* without evolving a theory about what he was doing. He exploded the old realistic genre even as he exploded his own role as a traditional narrator. As the omniscient narrator of the last section of the novel, he has no more authority than the other narrative centres, Benjy, Quentin, and Jason. Faulkner's naivety consisted in his doing what he felt he had to do in order to complete his task of telling his story. As Mellard points out, Faulkner has never been able to talk about this novel—or any of the others—in any theoretical way. He simply resorts to talk of carpentry, lumber, and building chicken houses.

In writing *Catch 22*, however, Joseph Heller was quite self-conscious about his method. He used the device of *déjà vu* as a way of constructing the circularity that is both the theme and the form of the novel. Heller went beyond the despairing vision of *The Sound and the Fury*, to bring Yossarian to a realization that he must make an existential act of individual affirmation, defy the catch 22 of military service and light out for Sweden. *Déjà vu* becomes a way in which Heller can recreate the universal myth of the journey into the labyrinthine underworld and back again into the world of light and consciousness.

In the sophisticated stage of the modernist novel, Richard Brautigan uses all the tricks of the trade: playing with narrative point-of-view, creating disjunction, underlining absurdity, and employing satiric and parodic forms to create what is in effect a kind of elegy—a picture of America up to its ears in junk. The last trout stream has been despoiled, the last wilderness polluted. The novel takes off from the idyllic scene in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*—another naive fiction—and echoes the pastoral visions of Thoreau and Fitzgerald. Although Brautigan is a highly sophisticated writer, he still uses the form as a *Kunsterroman*. The novel can be reconstructed from its bits and pieces to show how the artist moves from childhood to youth to maturity. Mellard claims that Brautigan, like Wallace Stevens, uses the stuff of the everyday world only to transform it through the power of the idealistic imagination. "Brautigan feels just as strongly as Stevens," Mellard contends, "that reality must constantly be reinterpreted, the old myths replaced, revitalised, or stripped of their husks in order to lay bare the life core." The reader, like the artist, must fish for new forms to portray new realities.

In a virtuoso conclusion in which Mellard sums up concisely and clearly the mainstreams of recent criticism of modern fiction, he points out that critics have created a great confusion of paradigms, all working towards the same idea. Terms suggested by recent critics include anti-fiction, meta-fiction, the non-fiction novel, transfiction, superfiction, surfiction, the *nouveau nouveau roman*, and structural fabulations. Each denotes the critics' lack of satisfaction with contemporary nomenclature of the novel; each describes a novelistic retreat from conventional realism into a self-reflexive concern with the writer's fictionality or an intense subjectivity. In the sciences and philosophy as well as in fiction, the uncertainty principle has become the reigning metaphor. The overwhelming problem

has become in many fields not rendering the world, but making it. The novelist makes it in the only way he can, through language—or language about language. Yet in all their attempts to escape the old conventions of realism, modern novelists have still based their parodies or absurdities on the conventions of the realistic novel.

In the end Mellard asks the question: "Where will the novel go from here?" He feels that the direction has already been sketched by Robert M. Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and Tim O'Brien in *Going After Cacciato*. Both novels go beyond the absurd realms of some modern fiction towards a new realism in which our condition of indeterminacy and immanence are made the foundation for understanding our own historical moment. Mellard believes that we have gone as far as the energy of the exploded form can take us and that our only direction must be back towards the origins of realism. "We will have to wait and see," he concludes, "if the novel will again spiral above its old realistic core in order to find its new realistic form." That, I think is more than a simple play on words. It amounts to a challenging question which should set critics of the modern novel thinking once more about the life of a form that has so often in the past been pronounced dead.

*Simon Fraser University*

*Peter Buitenhuis*

*The Poet's Calling in the English Ode.* By Paul H. Fry. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980. Pp. viii, 328. \$18.50.

This book is a cucumber. That it should be so is not very surprising since Paul H. Fry aspires to make his own work like the things he writes about—"I have chosen as my subject an experiment with vestigial shapes (making an ode of my own discourse)" (p. 119)—and more than half of the odes he writes about are also cucumbers. Dr. Johnson's classification, proposed originally only for the odes of Thomas Gray, has a general application: "They are forced plants raised in a hot-bed; and they are poor plants; they are but cucumbers after all."

In the case of *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode*, the hot-bed is Yale University, that new haven of cucumberdom (*le domaine du concombre*), where all reading is mis-reading, where all anxiety counts as influence (except, of course, any anxiety over something so *outré* as the common pursuit of true judgment), where all poems are about the writing of poems (except, of course, when they are about the impossibility of writing poems), and where the heroic reader penetrates the labyrinth of his own mis-readings to discover the absolute relative-truth that all poetic form exists in order to betray itself. The poet's calling in the English ode will thus be to discover that he hasn't got a calling.

Mr. Fry adheres to these principles with the utmost fidelity, even though, when reading the work of actual poets, he is under strong pressure

to deviate into sense. His thesis is that "in every ode of substance, an unstructuring or deformation occurs at the moment when form is most heroically overstrained" (p. 15), that "the ode is an infernal genre struggling to escape the hell of the psyche" (p. 273), and that therefore the "odist" always and necessarily discovers that which is indifferent, resistant, or hostile to his calling and therefore disruptive of his vocation. Fry distinguishes between odes and hymns by arguing that the former lack the certainty of belief in the deities or beings to whom they are addressed or whom they conventionally invoke: "Only the hymn speaks from knowledge, while the ode always hopes for knowledge" (p. 8). And he carries this distinction and his thesis to his interpretation of odes by actual poets: four from the seventeenth century, Jonson, Drayton, Milton, and Dryden; two from the eighteenth, Gray and Collins; and four from the early nineteenth century, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats.

The procedure is wholly uncritical. Mr. Fry is aware, for example, that Gray's "The Progress of Poesy" is "a painfully overworked and in some ways grotesque poem" (p. 89), but he also thinks that "its very intricacy begins to seem like an expedient cure to sublimate the Minotaur" (p. 89). Following this procedure, the 'critic' is able to justify any amount of bad writing—in fact, the more the better. As a result, laboured and cumbersome verse such as Ben Jonson's address to the "brave infant of Saguntum" in the "Cary-Morison Ode" receives many pages of analysis and is invested with a pseudo-profundity, while a beautifully graceful and dignified poem such as Jonson's "Ode to Sir William Sidney on His Birthday" is treated very briefly, and even then it is mangled to fit Fry's thesis. All poems appear as equal—as grist for the mill. Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," Fry argues, is really an ode rather than a hymn because of Shelley's ironic and sceptical treatment of his subject. Shelley, we are told, "knows nothing and claims to know nothing of Intellectual Beauty" (p. 196), except, we are also told, that it is "incomparably beautiful" (p. 196), that it "comes so deeply from within that it feels like a descending shadow" (p. 196), that it is "akin to madness" (p. 196), that it is "a daemonic force of revolution, both psychic and political" (p. 196), that it is "female" (p. 197), and that "all expression, all shaping and sequence, is the discourse of Intellectual Beauty" (p. 198). Moderately large claims these—for a poet who "claims to know nothing." The reader may be forgiven for wondering if Fry would recognize a claim if he saw one. So much for the distinction between hymns and odes!

Critical confusions, even ones as blatant as these, are apt to be dismissed or defended these days as mere matters of taste. The popular prejudice to which Mr. Fry assimilates himself claims that Dr. Johnson has no taste for, is inherently incapable of appreciating, either the ode as a genre or any poetry that is grandiloquent or tends toward the Romantic. It would help to make Fry's book interesting were he to attempt an actual refutation of Johnson. But in the absence of any such refutation, even granted its gross and untested assumption that anyone can write simply and clearly and that therefore the 'decision' to write otherwise *must* be

significant, *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode* is weakest precisely where it might be expected to be strongest. The discussion of Keats, the only poet to be treated at length in two separate chapters, is the climax of the book, his odes the "high point of a tradition" (p. 218). But the determinism of Fry's thesis, his belief in "the ode's necessary betrayal of its vatic calling" (p. 27), his claim that "an ode always betrays its argument" (p. 235), and his attribution of the summit of Keats's achievement to "a vacancy of the will" (p. 272) mean that Keats is scarcely credited with anything remarkable, and the clear implication remaining is that our ultimate admiration is reserved for the assiduous critic who has discovered these deep secrets.

For a critic with a more modest sense of himself and for a much finer discussion of Keats's truly remarkable exploration of the problem of "the very calling of poetry," one may turn to Robert Pinsky's pages on "Ode to a Nightingale" in *The Situation of Poetry* (Princeton U. P., 1976). Paul H. Fry says very early in his book that he will "assay a responsive overstrain of reading" (p. 15). He succeeds impeccably. "Overstrain" is the word for it, from start to finish. No one will accuse this book of "full-throated ease," or of *sprezzatura*. A cucumber is a fine thing in its own way, and it has been known to contribute very nicely to the crispness of a salad, but it must be kept cool.

Dalhousie University

John Baxter

*Contraries: Essays.* By Joyce Carol Oates. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. Pp. xiv, 187. \$19.95.

Here I am, opening my mail. There are two items. The first is a card from the Trade Publicity Department of the Oxford University Press, informing me that they will not honor my request for a copy of Joyce Carol Oates's *Contraries* ("we regret that our supply of review copies has been exhausted"). The second item is the book itself. Now part of me will always think that this seeming contretemps represents a cunning playfulness on the part of the publicity people at the O. U. P., an act of deliberate confusion, brilliantly timed, designed to promote a book that deals with ambiguity, paradox, the annihilation of opposites. But of course another part will see this mix-up as simple proof that, as Oates says in her essay on Lawrence, "our lives are tempered by the ungovernable contingencies of the world that is no metaphor, but our only home."

To Oates, great art faces the ungovernable contingencies of the world with a confused and sometimes violent fatalism. Our home may not be to our liking, exactly, but it is the only one we have. The seven essays in *Contraries* reflect a fascination with works that are murderous or suicidal or troublesome in some other way: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Possessed*, *King Lear*, *Nostromo*, the English and Scottish ballads,

*Women in Love, Ulysses.* Most such works represent not only the artist's individual bafflement but also (if secondarily) a societal uneasiness. According to Oates, "individual expressions of the tragic vision of life, however aesthetically and emotionally powerful they appear, are, first of all, to the artist a challenge of his individual artistry and an opportunity for him to experiment with partly conscious or totally unconscious elements in his own personality; but only in so far as these liberated elements can compete with the principle of reality itself, in tragic times usually represented by . . . a political and social order involving a great deal of oppression." Thus tragedy, though universal, is always "a direct response to a given environment." It follows that works that are not tragic are occasioned by a similar if less intense uneasiness; it goes without saying that that eternal child the artist will always be out of whack with his or her environment. And where else does art come from? Everything being equal, the greater the uneasiness, the greater the response to it. Or, as Oates says, "great works of art are necessarily flawed or incomplete because they represent, to the artist, one of the central mysteries of his —that which cannot be resolved, but which *must* be explored." That is why so many novels end vaguely, why "Dover Beach" contains both ignorant armies and a pliant lover, why Poe's favorite subject was a girl who is young and beautiful—and dead.

The best illustration of Oates's thesis is, to me, *Nostramo*. The Conrad essay is the real center of this collection, and as I read the other pieces, I found myself rereading this one, seeking clarification in Conrad of the claims Oates makes for other writers and for readers as well (a point I will return to later). It seems that Conrad "sets up again and again in his novels dialectical struggles—melodramas of 'opposites'—that cannot be resolved except through the destruction of both, and the necessary deaths or defeats of his central characters." Action is the means by which Conrad's characters realize themselves, for instance, yet action is the "barbed hook" that destroys them.

What is true for Conrad's sailors and empire-mongers is true for the rest of us as well. If the killing off of a character is "a cleansing, therapeutic event in the psychic life of the creator" because "the symbolic exorcism of deathly or ruinous character traits allows the creator not only the energetic pleasure of destroying something that needs to be destroyed, but the perspective, the detachment, that follows the destruction," then something similar happens when we read, say, the terror-filled English and Scottish folk ballads that, after all, we ourselves wrote. Let us not forget that, says Oates. "The vision of the 'folk'—the Unconscious—transcends history and is always contemporary with us. *We are folk, immortal.*"

Oates is an artist/critic in the manner of Coleridge, Arnold, James, and Eliot, which is to say that in writing about others she reveals a great deal about her own work. Fellow novelist John Gardner observes that the essays in *Contraries* are "valuable not only as the work of an extraordinary critical mind but also for the light they throw on Oates's fiction." Novelist, poet, short story writer, critic, teacher, National Book Award

winner, and Guggenheim Fellow, Oates belongs to her times in a way that few other writers do. Perhaps that is why she is resented so much. Her prolificacy and success account for what one critic refers to as "the snobbish attitude many sleek Eastern writers adopt toward her—an attitude summed up by one big female literary name with the dismissive comment: 'She's not our sort.'"

But the point is that most of the time it is us who are not our sort, and by our own half-certain hands. We iron out the contraries in our lives, make them smooth and one-dimensional. Then the world and its true children, the artists, restore the wrinkles, and once again we are puzzled, ill at ease, deeply human.

Florida State University

David Kirby

*Lawrence and the Nature Tradition: A Theme in English Fiction, 1859-1914.* By Roger Ebbatson. Brighton: Harvester Press; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980. Pp. xiii, 271. \$40.00.

So many books on Lawrence were published in the 1960s and early 1970s that one began to wonder whether there was anything left to be said. Mercifully, the stream has shown signs of drying up in the last few years, and now Roger Ebbatson offers a fresh intellectual context for Lawrence and in so doing produces a book that should revitalize our appreciation not only of Lawrence's challenge but of one of the traditions out of which he came. He begins by isolating two dominant (and conflicting) attitudes to Nature in the nineteenth century and argues that "the Nature tradition in the novel took the form of a synthesis of Romantic visions of Nature as revelation and deliverance and Darwinian pictures of man's ordeal in the natural world" (p. 26). He goes on to discuss Lawrence's awareness of the philosophical background involved and then backtracks to consider the fictional exploration of the subject in Meredith, Hardy, Jefferies, Hale White and Forster. He then returns to Lawrence to consider the impact of these writers on his work and to show how the variety and complexity of this tradition find their artistic culmination in Lawrence's fiction.

*Lawrence and the Nature Tradition* is a book that improves as it proceeds. Ebbatson has chosen a difficult topic, and the strain often shows. The opening chapters become a whirlwind tour of nineteenth-century philosophical and scientific positions, and there are times when the whole enterprise threatens to degenerate into a rather dry presentation of the history of ideas. Ebbatson makes a brave attempt to wrestle with complex and often opposed intellectual concepts, and even a non-philosopher like myself can find numerous opportunities to query and challenge. And when he turns to more literary treatments of this material, the applications can be awkward. It may be true that "*The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* offer us a magnificently actualized presentation of [Herbert] Spencer's principle of evolution and dissolution" (p. 40), but they are



obviously so much more that the comment seems reductive. Indeed, a recurrent difficulty throughout the book is the discussion of fiction in terms of abstract philosophical ideas when (as, ironically, Lawrence was most eloquent in asserting) the novel requires particular—and so not necessarily representative—instances.

The chapters on individual authors are more satisfying. Here Ebbatson's problem is to adapt his commentary to the needs of his readers (all will know Hardy and Forster, but how many will be familiar with Jefferies and Hale White?) without losing the cumulative force of his argument. The question of influence can often be tricky, and I think Ebbatson sometimes tries to argue for direct influence when only analogue can legitimately be claimed (I doubt, for example, if Lawrence ever had the opportunity of reading Jefferies' *Greene Ferne Farm*, which appeared five years before his birth and was not reprinted in Lawrence's lifetime). None the less, the important factor is the recurrent concern in all these writers to present the man/Nature problem in fictional terms, and Ebbatson is wholly persuasive, I think, in insisting upon the importance of this tradition alongside the more customary literary line from Dickens and George Eliot.

But the final chapter, bearing the same title as the whole book, is the most successful. Whatever reservations we may have about specific details in the earlier pages, Lawrence emerges in a fresh and convincing way, and it would be difficult to challenge Ebbatson's general contention that "Lawrence's imagination was, in his early years, vitally shaped by the concepts of Nature and man which he found, not only in Hardy, but also in Meredith, Hale White and Jefferies" (p. 241). Ebbatson has followed clues leading off the beaten literary-critical track that previous commentators have ignored, and he proves his case that "the 'country of my heart' was both topographical and literary" (p. 242).

There are, then, various objections to be raised about this book, both in its tactics (Ebbatson seems to assume that the novelists he discusses have undertaken the same systematic reading of the intellectual background that he has completed himself) and in some of its literary judgments (can *The Trespasser* usefully be described as "Wordsworthian in its grasp of the theme of man, woman and Nature" [p. 63]? is *Maurice* a "major work," "Forster's most Lawrencean work" [pp. 228, 235]?). More careful phrasing and a little more cautious argument would have obviated many difficulties. But the book is more original and stimulating than many less vulnerable studies. Even if many of his conclusions have to be qualified, Ebbatson should be congratulated for bringing, both literally and metaphorically, a breath of fresh air into the rather stale atmosphere of current Lawrence scholarship.