

Book Reviews

***Challenging the Regional Stereotypes: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes.* By E. R. Forbes. Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1989. Pp. 220. Paper, \$16.95.**

Some people think that the job of historians is to find out What Really Happened, objectively. On the other hand, an increasingly vocal minority rejects the very notion of objectivity as a kind of ideological imperialism of Dead White Males which ignores or minimizes the perspectives of dissident and minority groups. This "postmodern" view is now under fairly serious counterattack. As the current, building reaction against "political correctness" suggests, there is a large and powerful constituency which does not want to see History dismantled into discreet and often conflicting histories of women, ethnic groups, homosexuals etc. (*The Guardian Weekly* 26 May 1991; *The Atlantic Monthly* March 1991).

The ideal of objectivity certainly remains dear to many historians, both of the Right and the Left. In fact however, the mass of historical evidence is so great, often so contradictory and normally so biased in terms of the class, gender and racial background of its sources, that a coherent interpretation of it can only be achieved by a rigorous process of sorting. Faced with thousands of pages of reports, reams of statistics, transcripts, interviews, diaries, photographs and more, the historian necessarily discards *the majority* of the information he or she sees, weeding out the irrelevant, highlighting the important and diminishing the not-so-important. Also, most people's voices are traditionally silent and that silence itself may be judged historically significant. Hence speculation and extrapolation must be added to the research process.

Claims of objectivity notwithstanding, all of this organizing of information is done according to the personal principles of the researcher. The process is therefore inherently and inescapably political, that is, reflective of a certain, determinate view of the proper organization of

society and the world. For example, when a historian deems it unnecessary to search out and record the views of, say, women or factory workers, he or she has made a judgment about the relative political importance of those people. Until the 1970s in Canada, the overwhelming majority of historians did not view such people as worthy of much consideration. Rather, the activities and perspectives of white male politicians, businessmen or explorers were the major topic of interest. Historians (who happened to be mostly white and male) organized their research along those lines and presented History to us as a succession of Great Men making Progress.

Maritimers are well placed, after more than half a century of relative industrial and agricultural decline, to question the notion of continuous progress. For a historian to challenge such an ingrained ideology is however, a much more difficult task than to simply contest facts. It is refreshing therefore to encounter a book like *Challenging the Regional Stereotype*. Ernest Forbes is dissatisfied with the status quo and clearly believes that a more just and equitable alternative can be achieved. Eleven of his essays written over the past two decades are brought together in this volume, and while the topics range widely, they are unified by the theme of confronting the major myths or stereotypes which pervade Maritime history and politics and which powerfully serve the interest of the status quo.

The most pervasive myth about the region is that of its conservatism. As Forbes demonstrates in his examination of the way that historians have written about the region, this is contrasted with the dynamism of the frontier and Central Canada in order to explain both the lack of industrialization and the low appeal of radical political parties. The myth has therefore been popular not only with Central Canadians and local elites (who are largely exonerated by it from blame for regional underdevelopment) but also among social reformers and leftist politicians (to explain their lack of electoral success). In fact, Forbes argues, Maritimers were often more progressive than other Canadians and even, at times, precipitously hasty to adopt new ideas.

In Forbes's view, the Maritimes are not naturally poor but were "underdeveloped" by the conscious, if short-sighted, decisions of policy-makers both in the region and in Ottawa. In "Misguided Symmetry," for instance, he shows how the rate structure for freight on the railways was dictated by Ottawa to meet the demands of business interests and politicians in Central and Western Canada with immediate and disastrous consequences for Maritime manufacturing. In "Consolidating Disparity," Forbes shows how Ottawa's planning for post-World War II development

explicitly discriminated against the remaining industries (such as Sydney Steel) in order to facilitate the concentration of manufacturing in the Toronto-Montreal area. These conclusions are supported by thorough empirical evidence and a critical analysis of secondary sources of all ideological stripes.

The final chapter on free trade with the USA is a sobering reminder that the transfer payments which have largely sustained the Maritime economy since the 1950s were based only partly on altruism in Ottawa. More crucially, they were buttressed by the return of most of the money to Central Canada by Maritimers' purchases of services or goods manufactured there. Free trade with the USA, because it undermines the economic aspect of Upper Canadian goodwill, could well initiate painful changes to the Maritimes' relationship to the rest of the country.

Eschewing both the elitism of political or business history and the tired (and tiring) jargon of the various "anti-imperialist" schools, Forbes imbues his work with sensitivity to the standpoint of the underdog. The activities and decisions of Great Men he places in the context of what common people were thinking and doing, showing, for instance, how economic pressures on the working classes during the Depression era underlay the rumrunning, social gospel and political agitation which provided the stage upon which politicians constructed the modern welfare state. This sensitivity also allows him to critique those Marxists who, in their obsession with class structures, dismiss individuals who don't fit the pattern. In his analysis of the suffragette movement, Forbes argues that neither the appeals of these women to "maternalism" nor their ultimate failure to achieve women's liberation in the 1920s should be held against them. Rather, maternalism was, in the historical context, not simply "false consciousness" but an effective weapon in the struggle for a quite radical change.

Ideologues of the Left, of course, have not had much impact on Maritime development, not even those vocal "PC" few who are currently being denounced as totalitarian. Infinitely more pernicious has been the impact of ideologues of the Right, including, not least of all, the current crop in power in Ottawa. This book is a well-researched and well-written rebuttal to their historical claims about free enterprise, Canadian nationalism and the patriarchal family. Along the lines of David Alexander's essays on Newfoundland, Forbes provides an invaluable antidote to the political fatalism which the stereotype of regional conservatism encourages.

***Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson.* By Camille Paglia. London and New Haven: Yale UP, 1990. Pp. 718; illus.; index. \$35.00.**

Camille Paglia claims that Madonna needs her to explain how the entertainer serves as "the latest atavistic discoverer of the pagan heart of Catholicism" ("Dinner Conversation: She Wants her TV! He Wants his Book!," *Harper's* March 1991: 46). This sort of assertion helps explain Paglia's title of Hot Critic in *Rolling Stone's* 1991 "Who's Hot" issue, though her notoriety largely stems from the 1990 publication of *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. As part of her ongoing battle with poststructuralism and contemporary feminism, Paglia defines an archetypal rereading of cultural phenomena, a fusion of Freud and Frazer, which recognizes a decadent impulse in the representation of sexuality throughout the history of Western civilization. Her premise is a biological essentialism, opposing earthbound, mysterious, childbearing, instinctive woman to outward-reaching, intellectually and physically exploring, empire-building, rational man. Because men must escape the mysteries their wives and mothers represent, they build, and so nature becomes culture, sexuality becomes eroticism, and gender becomes the sexual persona or contrived mask which expresses the ongoing tension in the relationship of masculinity to femininity, or culture to nature. Paglia extends this tension to cultural paradigms of dualism: Dionysianism and Apollonianism, paganism and Judeo-Christianity, anarchy and order.

Since she admits no complexity or possibility of evolution in essential gender identity, all expressions of this tension are in some way androgynous. Representations are explored on a wild ride through visual and literary expression from antiquity to the mid nineteenth century, variously stopping to examine Spenser, Botticelli, Rousseau and de Sade, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Melville, Emerson, Wilde, Poe and a host of others, concluding with Emily Dickinson. Since her analysis is essentialist and her representational types static, differing in degree but never in kind, she freely relates Byron to Elvis Presley, Nefertiti to David Bowie, and even Oscar Wilde to Woody Allen.

Her perspective, however, is rigidly hierarchical, explicitly privileging the white Western male cultural heritage she considers responsible for all beneficial progress. True, this professor of humanities at Philadelphia's University of the Arts demands an appreciation of the visual, of non-verbal

means of artistic expression, and champions the survival of paganism in popular culture. Yet she clearly separates realms of cultural experience, and not on parallel lines; her analysis is profoundly conservative.

I shall argue that western personality and western achievement are, for better or worse, largely Apollonian. Apollo's great opponent Dionysus is ruler of the chthonian whose law is procreative femaleness. As we shall see, the Dionysian is liquid nature, a miasmatic swamp whose prototype is the still pond of the womb.

We must ask whether the equivalence of male and female in Far Eastern symbolism was as culturally efficacious as the hierarchization of male over female has been in the west. Which system has ultimately benefited women more? Western science and industry have freed women from drudgery and danger. Machines do housework. The pill neutralizes fertility. Giving birth is no longer fatal. And the Apollonian line of western rationality has produced the modern aggressive woman who can think like a man and write obnoxious books. The tension and antagonism in western metaphysics developed human higher cortical powers to great heights. Most of western culture is a distortion of reality. But reality *should* be distorted, that is, imaginatively amended. The Buddhist acquiescence to nature is neither accurate about nature nor just to human potential. The Apollonian has taken us to the stars.

There is much to dispute here, but Paglia is not interested in debate. She never proposes; she asserts. Her rigidity, in argument, style and structure, ultimately renders *Sexual Personae* reductive and unconvincing. In her emphasis on individual personality, which she sees threatened by virtually all liberal impulses, she makes herself a paradigm of Western critical perception, so that too many of her assertions are given autobiographical authority. Moreover, androgyny and decadence too often become the only reason to contemplate a work, rather than aspects of it. In her dismissal of contemporary feminist and poststructuralist theories, she refuses much mention, let alone explication of their faults; her enemies largely remain unnamed and unexamined. Yet while most of her critical sources predate the 1920s, she offers little explanation of their virtues. Harold Bloom serves as her preferred contemporary critic, and his glowing remarks on the dust jacket are answered by many respectful references to his work.

Her argument works best with subjects like Swinburne or Wilde, who have generally been regarded as decadent anyway, or occasionally with

visual representation. Otherwise, she relies far too heavily on quotation or paraphrase followed by comments more like punch lines than analysis (I agree with Paglia's nemesis, Helen Vendler, who in her review of *Sexual Personae* claims that Paglia "goes on as if assertion were its own evidence" and that in her paragraphs "the sentences lack connection and syntactic subordination: they lie on the page like so many mutually repellent atoms, incapable of forming a molecular structure." [*New York Review of Books*, May 31, 1990: 25]). This is part of her assertive style, which at worst is careless to the point that it makes no sense. For example, discussing Henry James, she writes, "Kate Croy's father declares, 'If I offer you to efface myself, it's for the final, fatal sponge that I ask, well saturated and well applied.' Fatal sponges are refugees from horror films." Henry James, no doubt, was greatly influenced by such films.

In some cases (most of the American writers), Paglia's approach begs the question of why include someone she does not intend to treat properly. Consequently, *Sexual Personae* is overly subjective and lacks genuine rigor, as if she were racing through the people she felt she should include to get to the highlights, particularly Spenser, de Sade and Dickinson. Her approach allows her to dismiss anyone (Chaucer or Dickens, for example) whose world view does not coincide with hers; she can bypass representations of both social harmony and social criticism to concentrate on those she considers valuable for revealing the horrors of essential human nature and thus supporting the need for strict social controls. *Sexual Personae* is stimulating and its scope breathtaking. Nevertheless, Camille Paglia's refusal to engage in active, specific debate those who perceive existence and its representations differently diminishes the strength of her arguments in this book.

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Gisèle Marie Baxter

Lucretius on Death and Anxiety: Poetry and Philosophy in De Rerum Natura. By Charles Segal. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990. Pp. xii, 279. \$29.95.

Segal's attempt to integrate Lucretius's "poetry of death and war into the overall appreciation of his poetry of life and happiness" (4) is also an

attempt to deal with the oldest and most persistent problem posed by the *De Rerum Natura*, that of the apparent contrast between the proclamation of Epicurean tranquillity and some of the most powerful descriptions of physical pain and death in Latin literature. Segal's success is largely due to his respect for the text and his refusal to attempt to go back of it into the poet's mind: the tension between the philosopher-moralist's "concern to eradicate fear" and "the poet's interest in conveying raw terror" cannot be resolved by "an *ad hominem* appeal to his allegedly morbid personality or pessimistic outlook" (239). That tension is not the product of the poet's mind, according to Segal, but inherent in the Epicurean system, and arises out of the affect-laden approach of the poet to the science of Epicurus and his atomist forerunner Democritus. Segal makes frequent reference to the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* and to the writings of Plutarch and Cicero to demonstrate what he believes to be the generality and impersonality of Epicurus's teaching and contends that Lucretius as practical Roman poet sensitive to the pleasures and pains of life in the flesh goes far towards humanizing and individualizing his master's approach.

On the basis of the Lucretian contention that fears of the mythical afterlife are displaced forms of fears of unhappiness in this life, and that the worst of these fears and the one underlying all the rest is fear of death, and that suicide may ironically be an attempt to escape that fear, Segal contends that there is evidence of displacement (in a technical, Freudian sense) in the *De Rerum Natura* itself. What is said about mutilation and putrefaction, for example, in the discussion of proofs of the soul's mortality and of the sorts of things people fear for their bodies after death, he argues, is a displaced form of, or implicit reference to what psychologists call anxiety about primary boundary violation, that is, fear of death. By giving first implicit then, in the account of the plague with which the poem ends, explicit expression to this "hidden, unavowed and unspeakable dread" (19) Lucretius removes some of its terror; he is thus heir to the tragic poets effecting catharsis by the arousing of fear and forerunner of modern psychotherapy by subsequently allaying it. The generalities of book 3 become explicit, specific instances in the account of the plague which is then both historical and paradigmatic. Book 6 itself is unified by the opening and closing references to Athens, birthplace of Epicurus and place of the plague. So-called "emblematic" passages like the description of the primitive watching himself being alive and that of wild beasts used in battle

play a particularly important role in giving expression to deeply irrational fears which are thus brought to the surface and laid open for treatment.

As the full title suggests, Segal's work is particularly sensitive to the pervasiveness of the poetic expression which he feels is integrated with the philosophic much more fully than either Lucretius's own metaphor of the honey on the rim of the cup or traditional focus on the so-called purple passages implies: "the range and nuances of feeling and the images and associations that only poetry can evoke enable him to explore dimensions of the fear of death that the prose writings of Epicurus could not touch" (x). Chapter VIII's study of III 1024-44 situates the *De Rerum Natura* within the ancient poetic tradition stylistically and thematically in a rich, thorough and evocative manner. Although readers of the extant work of Epicurus will generally agree with the characterizations of abstractness, distance and generality the tone of the letter to Menoeceus and Epicurean emphasis on friendship argue otherwise and too much is made of the argument *ex silentio*; Segal's own comment with reference to Epicurus on death is most revealing: "Lucretius supplies what is missing in Epicurus (or at least in what we have of Epicurus)" (22). The value of the anti-Epicurean material in this regard, especially Plutarch, is questionable. The most vulnerable aspect of Segal's method concerns his assumption as to what the text implies rather than states explicitly. It would be safer to speak of the effect of the text than of the author's purpose or method; reading the text in the wake of psychoanalysis we are prone to have recourse to our frame of reference, a process that is entirely valid for the text's relationship to us: poetic insight is one thing, Freudian psychoanalysis another. The attempt to see patterns and to draw parts of the work together linguistically as well as thematically is praiseworthy in itself and largely convincing as is the case with individuals seeing themselves caught by the plague (*se quisque videbat* VI 1231) recalling individuals caught by wild beasts (*unus . . . quisque* V 990), but can the description of the lionesses pulling down their victims from behind *nec opinantis* (V 1320) really be said significantly to echo the *movements* of Death herself more than 2,700 lines earlier as she *stands* by the head of the hapless banqueter *nec opinanti* (III 959)?

Segal works from the assumption that Lucretius believed his own counsel "so far as one can tell" (8) and that he intended the work to end as it does, and whether he is right or wrong on either count there is no

indication in the text as we have it that that is not the case. Surprisingly this is not an insignificant advance in Lucretian scholarship and points up the danger of allowing theories about a text to intrude upon and obscure the text itself.

Acadia University

A. Peter Booth

***Henry Fielding: A Life.* By Martin C. Battestin, with Ruthe Battestin. New York: Routledge, 1989. Pp. 738. 65 Plates. \$49.95.**

Martin Battestin begins his biography of Fielding by describing just how daunting the project seemed to him when he first considered its feasibility some fifteen years ago. Hardly any new discoveries about the novelist's personal life had been made since W. L. Cross's biography half a century earlier (1918). Battestin was fearful of ending up like F. Homes Dudden did in 1952 when he produced an 1,100 page life of Fielding only to leave "his subject where he found him" (xiii). As the head of the Wesleyan edition of Fielding's works, Battestin is the man who would be most likely to uncover any hitherto unknown details about the novelist, and, as one might expect, his research has not come up empty. Chief among the Battestins' (i.e., "with" Ruthe) findings is the attribution to Fielding of a number of *Craftsman* essays dating back to 1734. This contention, if it holds up, means that Fielding was writing for the opposition well before critics have generally thought. But Battestin's work is much more than a just a few new pieces of information spread out through a retelling of a familiar story. The Battestins pass over nothing; for instance, both the Leyden and Lisbon episodes of Fielding's life are fully presented.

As one expects, Battestin does get his reader to see the connections between Fielding's life and the novels. We begin with a discussion of the incestuous elements in Fielding's relationship with his sisters Sarah and Beatrice—an important feature considering the danger or fear of incest as it is presented in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, as well as in Sarah's own *David Simple*—i.e., the story of Camilla and her brother Valentine (23-27). We meet the real-life model for Parson Adams, one Reverend William Young who was so absentminded that as a chaplain during the War of the

Austrian Succession, he took a solitary stroll only to wander right into a French camp (374)!

Fielding's financial mismanagement (Battestin is not above puns)—"[Fielding's] complaints about being short of cash are hard to credit" (508)—and that of his father seem to "coalesce" in the character of Captain Booth, anti-hero of *Amelia* (541).

In the early years, Battestin draws the picture of a young man who could not control his passions—who at eighteen had tried to abduct a west country heiress with whom he was in love, who (as the bright new playwright) would make and lose a thousand pounds in the course of a few weeks, and finally, who had a gargantuan appetite for food and other sensual delights that could be met at the famous brothels operated by Mothers Punchbowl and Needham. He was largely raised by his older aunts—Fielding's mother dying when the novelist was only eleven, and Fielding's father preferring to pursue new wives and his military career. In Battestin's words, "It would be some time yet before, like his heroes Tom Jones and Billy Booth, [Fielding] learned to bring himself under control" (52).

Battestin gives us a full picture of Fielding's acquaintances. We learn how he befriended his second cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose support was instrumental in convincing Cibber to listen to *Love in Several Masques*, an incident that began Fielding's very successful, if short lived, theatrical career. Hits like *The Author's Farce*, *Tom Thumb* and *Pasquin* are traced from the earliest inspiration to the final night. Fielding's failed attempt at innovation, *The Modern Husband*, is likewise given close attention. We meet Harry Hatsell, one of Fielding's early beer-swilling companions who apparently told a doctor who was treating him for venereal disease that "Nature had erred in providing man with ten toes but only a single vulnerable organ of generation" (160). We follow the wonderful comic talent of "Kitty" Clive as she charms a succession of audiences.

Fielding's life does lend itself neatly to a sectional study. After the Licensing Act ended his sensational and very public theatrical career, Fielding endured a number of difficult private years as his wife and daughter suffered, and eventually succumbed to, chronic poverty and illness. Somehow, at practically the most tragic point of his personal life, Fielding managed to write a classic of comic literature, *Joseph Andrews*. Battestin's statement, "Indeed, despite the melancholy circumstances in which Fielding wrote it, *Joseph Andrews* is the most cheerful of books" (331), clearly understates the situation. Fielding's first born daughter died

in March 1741/2 probably a victim of the epidemic fever that swept through London, while his wife Charlotte eventually fell to consumption. The last instalment of Fielding's life sees him presiding as a Westminster magistrate, horrified at the kind of behavior he himself fell into as a young man (e.g., drinking, gambling, etc.). Here, however, were a different folk, for while Fielding always considered himself to have been better born than his circumstances would suggest, he railed at the so-called luxurious indulgences of the lower class—their gin consumption, their aping of the manners of their betters.

Throughout the biography Battestin returns to a couple of key points. First, despite his successes at the Haymarket and Drury Lane, Fielding could never live within his means. In this, he would resemble his father who failed to provide consistently for his children and ended up dying in debtors' prison. Second, we come to know Fielding's professional attitude towards his work—that his pen was for hire when his family was in dire need. Battestin suspects that Fielding took money from Walpole for not publishing *The Grub-Street Opera*. Likewise, the politically problematic "The Opposition: A Vision" was not, according to Battestin, directed solely at the Pulteney-Carteret faction but included his friends and was a result of his frustration at not being rewarded enough for supporting the Patriot cause.

Readers are also able to trace the development of some of Fielding's views on art, in particular his theory of laughter. It may even come as a surprise (and relief) to discover that some comic writers of the Augustan Age, like Fielding, found the heroic couplet too "artificial" and "restrictive" (353). On the rivalry with Richardson, Battestin defends Fielding for at least having done the right thing in marrying his servant Mary Daniels after she found herself pregnant by him.

Fielding's life is crowded with fascinating stories. He was in Bath in September 1746 when the scandal broke that "[t]here on 13 September, Mary Hamilton—lesbian and transvestite—was arrested for having duped a young woman of Wells and married her" (410-11). As magistrate, Fielding came in touch with some of the most hardened criminals and the most sensational cases, such as the incredible story of Elizabeth Canning who claimed to have been held captive for a month in a brothel before she made a spectacular escape. She testifies before Fielding against her captors only to suffer a perjury charge later on when her story is contradicted by a witness of dubious reputation. Canning was ultimately convicted and

sentenced to transportation in what seems, after reading Battestin's account, a horrible miscarriage of justice. Some imminent people also appear at Bow Street, like the renowned Cavaliere Jean-Nicholas Servandoni, who was at the centre of the London fireworks fiasco that marked the public celebration of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748). Director of stage design at the Paris opera and architect of the church of St. Sulpice, Servandoni was commissioned to construct the machine for sending up the fireworks. Never one to take half-measures, he built a Doric temple 114 feet high! When his temple caught fire from an errant rocket, Servandoni was prevented from trying to dose the flames; desperate to save his monument, he threatened to pull his sword which landed him in jail, and two days later he appeared before justice Fielding. Battestin does an excellent job of bringing these stories to life, and although some readers may prefer that their biographers be more self-conscious about the fictional quality of their reconstructed histories, more will here simply allow Battestin to engage them by his wonderful narrative presentation.

Perhaps there are better novelists or dramatists in the English tradition, but Fielding does rank with the best (e.g., Chaucer) in literary humor. Undoubtedly, he still has a following of devoted readers as evidenced by the 47 (his age at death) roses that appeared mysteriously on his Lisbon grave in 1988. However, suffice to say that not only the devout Fielding scholar will take pleasure and profit from reading this study—anybody interested in eighteenth-century English culture should enjoy a romp through Battestin's *Life*.

Dalhousie University

David McNeil

***Thomas Hardy and Visual Structures: Framing, Disruption, Process.* By Sheila Berger. New York: New York UP, 1990. Pp. xv, 224. \$40.00.**

The aim of Sheila Berger's *Thomas Hardy and Visual Structures*, "to grasp the texture of Hardy's visualizing language" (xi), is intriguing and inviting. For in spite of the previous publication of numerous articles and at least two books on visual aspects of Hardy's work (Joan Grundy's *Hardy and the Sister Arts* [London: Macmillan, 1979] and J. B. Bullen's *The Expressive Eye* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1986]), there is still the need for a theoretically

informed consideration of the relationship between visual and verbal elements in Hardy's work and in nineteenth-century texts more generally. Berger's study, however, is disappointing for its inconsistencies, its fuzzy-mindedness, and its emotiveness.

Berger attempts both to historicize Hardy by making him into a specifically "modern" writer and to place him outside historical boundaries by seeing him as a universal artist figure who "saw the essential lines and shapes of everything" (xii). She is never precise, moreover, about her definition of "modern"—a term that has been variously used—and one can only conclude from her frequent allusions to T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wallace Stevens, as well as to the "existential isolation" (6) and the "absurd condition" comprising "the modern dilemma" (117), that she is obliquely referring to a version of "modernism" that was celebrated during the middle years of the twentieth century, long after the death of Thomas Hardy.

Berger's conflation of the "universal" and the "modern" is accomplished by a silent change made to the most quoted phrase in the book, taken from Erwin Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (1962). Referring first to the "essential tendencies of the human mind" that could be revealed, according to Panofsky, by an examination of Renaissance visual images, Berger on the same page revises his words to say that Hardy "uses character to establish the essential tendencies of the *modern* mind and to reveal *his* view of the historical-cultural conditions in which *we* live" (22, italics added). From this point onward, every allusion to Panofsky's phrase then substitutes "(modern)" for "human." The illogic hidden by this sleight of hand is made more emphatic by Berger's assumption that Hardy could speak about the "historical-cultural conditions" either of an unspecified "modern" era or of the late twentieth century "in which we live," which is often labelled not "modern," but "post-modern."

The vague term "modern" thus serves to erase the specificity both of the Victorian/Edwardian era in which Hardy lived and of the time in which Berger and her readers are interpreting Hardy—a time in which one must somehow come to terms with the contemporary idea that the mediating function of language unsettles the opposition between "life" and "art." In these terms, no text can reflect a pre-existing and extra-linguistic "reality," nor can any writer control completely the text bearing her or his signature. Berger, however, clings to the notion that Hardy's "artist's eye . . . calls attention to its own absolute and unmediated structuring of matter" (139).

In her fixation on Hardy's personal genius lies an evasion of the very "historical-cultural" conditions that she claims to be considering.

Another symptom of Berger's refusal to engage the ideas of her own time can be seen in her attraction to one mid twentieth-century style of literary analysis: most of the critics whom she quotes praisingly wrote between the 1940s and the early 1970s and tend to use a rhetoric of abstraction and wholeness that is extreme even by New Critical standards. The polemical tones of Emma Clifford's 1961 essay typify the brand of thinking that Berger both admires and seeks to imitate:

For Hardy's world is a yearning world. It exists within a perpetually changing universe in which the sensitive observer is always looking backward and forward; nothing that happens is ever over and done with, as each event goes on to be an object of eternal questioning in space and time. The purpose of man's existence in this world is to feel the suffering involved in the processes of life . . . which are past understanding. In the modern universe cosmic agony is overwhelmed by cosmic energy. (53)

Such fuzzy rhetoric translates in Berger's own prose into statements such as the following, which appears twice in *Thomas Hardy and Visual Structures*: "The whole world of human concerns seems to have passed through [Hardy's] imagination to become knowledge in the form of visual structures" (xii, 152-3). But what *is* "the whole world of human concerns," and how could such an immense concept pass through a single writer's imagination? How could it then become "knowledge" and take the form of "visual structures"?

The totalizing tendency in Berger's book is sometimes disguised by a language of indeterminacy and fragmentation. The denial of wholeness, however, always leads to another assertion of it: from "framing" and "disruption" comes "process," and in Berger's dialectical thinking, the third factor always encompasses and transcends the previous two. In practical terms, this means that *The Dynasts* is rejected for its self-reflexivity: its "denial of imagination, of myth-making, of fictions, of process—in life and in art; it is the denial of metaphor and of metamorphosis—the end of magic" (129). And where Berger does see "magic," she constructs it herself by a pollyanna-ish reading of some of Hardy's darkest moments. Thus Stonehenge in *Tess* is "a visual structuring of the process of discovery," and the murder of Alec d'Urberville is "a self-generating creative act" (185), while Jude Fawley's death scene receives this ecstatic interpretation: "in the

background, from out the window and from within the room, words are what we hear. But in the foreground—mixed with worn-out books and stone-dust and defeat—joyous and reverberating sound waves travelling round the room are what we see. There is still some magic in our eyes" (175). It is precisely this yearning for and fabrication of "magic" that makes *Thomas Hardy and Visual Structures* such a disappointment: it is less concerned with how things are seen in Hardy's texts than with how Sheila Berger wants to see.

University of Western Ontario

Kristin Brady

***Music With Words: A Composer's View.* By Virgil Thomson. New Haven, London: Yale UP, 1989. Pp. x, 178. \$19.95.**

Despite its author's disclaimer, *Music With Words* is quite suitable for use as a textbook, if one has in mind a course of study over the shoulder of a craftsperson (and not a digest or summary for a crowded lecture hall of undergraduate minors). Its subject matter is largely practical, concerned with the mechanics of setting words and not losing them in the process. The apprenticing composer, the student of song and opera, singers especially—all will find the treatment measured, clear, and well considered. The tone is that of a friendly master turned pedagogue, with plenty of imperative but a minimum of invective (this from the man who once likened a contemporary's music to a "perfumed stream of urine"). While an earlier book, *The State of Music* (New York: 1939, 1962, reprinted 1974), entered into similar topics ("How to Write a Piece, or Functional Design in Music"), no course so comprehensive has emerged from Thomson's pen, nor for that matter is it easy to think of another book like it, devoted to text setting, by a modern musician.

The layout shows this is indeed a textbook, and not simply a collection of essays. The actual words about music occupy roughly half of the book; the remaining pages comprise musical examples and illustrations from the author's published works with brief annotations. Chapter titles include: "Word-Groupings," "Helping the Performer," "Instrumental Helps and Hindrances," and "Both Words and Emotions Are Important." But this is not a recipe book. Thomson shows not how it's done but how it could be

done. The style of doing it remains the prerogative of the reader. Nor is the subject matter dry, of little interest to the casual admirer of music and song. For example, appended is a brief but lively introduction to the International Phonetic Alphabet, illustrated by phonetic transcriptions of the opening sentences to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in the regional dialects of Chicago, Boston (!), Dallas, New Orleans, Richmond, San Francisco, something called "Received Pronunciation (England)," and Scotland.

What this book means for the fortunes of Thomson's music is a question of some moment. Buried under several layers of ignorance, distaste, and indeed sheer animosity lies a great body of American music from about the middle of our century (not to speak of Canadian or European music), music of the Blitzsteins, Pistons, and the Thomson's, composers overwhelmed in our current estimation by their more adventuresome contemporaries (Parch, Cage). Much of it is good solid craft, along the lines set forth in this book. Whether it will be recognized as such remains to be seen. Surely interest in Thomson's work, and perhaps his lesser known contemporaries, will improve with this publication.

Université d'Ottawa

Murray Dineen

***Soviet Literature in the 1980s: Decade of Transition.* By N. N. Schneidman. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989. Pp. viii, 250. \$40.00.**

During the 1960s a yearly pleasure for Slavists was Marc Slonim's concise summary and analysis of the Soviet literary scene for the *Americana Annual*. Professor Schneidman continues this useful tradition, albeit on a decennial basis, in this sequel to his *Soviet Literature in the 1970s: Artistic Diversity and Ideological Conformity*, (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1979). He confines his examination to officially-published prose in Russian, excluding *samizdat*, *tamizdat*, most literature of the republics, poetry, and drama. Within these bounds, alas, much of what was innovative and interesting in 1978-1988 must be left untreated.

What remains is organized according to generation, genre, or authorial gender. Faced with an overwhelming amount of material, Professor Schneidman wisely relies on his own tastes in what he chooses to analyze. These are straightforward, and unlikely to disturb his readers. Among other

things, he dislikes digressions and lack of artistic unity (43), repetitious and superficial philosophizing (52), lack of psychological insight (55). He approves of balance and lyricism (59), consistency of chronology (64), dramatic intensity and sincerity (124), fresh and expressive language tinged with irony (177). His purpose is "to assess the impact of the political and social changes of the last decade on the development of Soviet culture and literature," to "help the reader better to understand the intricate forces that guide the creative process of writers in the Soviet Union and the significance of contemporary literature as a social, political, and ideological tool and as a mirror of contemporary Soviet conditions." The plot summaries he provides are clear and compact; they are sometimes followed by brief overviews of Soviet critical reaction to the works.

Two cursory survey chapters, the first examining the relationship between literary theory and practice within the USSR, the second describing the literary evolution of the decade, are followed by a summing up of the careers of three members of the older generation: Valentin Kataev (1897-1986), Iurii Trifonov (1927-1981), and Vladimir Tendriakov (1923-1984), of whom Trifonov, whose later work debunked the socialist realism which first brought him fame, seems the most likely to retain his reputation. A chapter is devoted to the development of so-called "village prose," concluding that the writers associated with this school have now transcended it, and that its literary techniques are no longer adequate to the problems faced by the radically changed Soviet countryside. Other chapters treat the literature of the Second World War (twenty thousand books since 1945 with no sign of tapering off), and the political thriller, still obsessed with the duplicity of the US government and the heroism of the Soviet security police. Less effective are the discussions of poets' prose, a complex subject which deserves separate treatment, and of innovations and experiment during the 1980s, which are viewed as affecting subject matter much more than form, an inevitable but deceptive conclusion when the works analyzed are restricted to the main stream, and drama and poetry are left out. The chapter on women writers also suffers from the exclusion of poets, but will introduce the excellent Tat'iana Tolstaia, a subtle prose stylist, to a wider audience.

Although the book draws no comparisons between the bulk of Soviet literature and Western pulp writing, one is struck by the similarities: mass literature, with its formulaic plot and character portrayal, is remarkably homogeneous, whatever its ideology. Prolific Leningrader Il'ia Shtemler,

author of such epics as *Taksopark [Taxi Fleet]*, *Univermag [Department Store]* and *Poezd [Train]*, is the Russian equivalent of Arthur Haley. Immensely popular but tawdry historical novelist Valentin Pikul' is a step down from John Jakes. The list could be extended. A sociological approach is perhaps the only viable one in these cases, the main interest for the non-Russian reader being the exotic details of a formerly inaccessible everyday life. The approach is less successful, however, in displaying the emblematic rather than the symptomatic—those works and writers able to assuage what Osip Mandelstam called our "nostalgia for world culture."

Dalhousie University

John A. Barnstead

***Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties.* By Paul Axelrod. Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1990. Pp. 268. illus. \$34.95.**

This is an admirably concise book, clearly written and based on extensive scholarship: more than a third of its brief length is devoted to notes rather than text. Its tone, both complacent and mildly ironic, is a model of Canadian academic style. While offering little to astonish its readers, it provides a solid and useful empirical foundation for the view that the major social functions of Canadian universities have consistently been to identify, recruit, socialize, and certify Canadian young men to serve an evolving economic elite. During the depression and war years of the 1930s, these functions were highly critical. Dr. Axelrod, however, is not: having apparently grown accustomed to the face of academia.

The tone of this book is well-illustrated by the comment in which Axelrod sums up his excellent and detailed discussion of medical education in Canada during the 1930s:

Like their counterparts in the humanities and social sciences, those associated with medical training were not blind to the system's deficiencies, but neither were they moved to alter it significantly . . . While altruistic, cultured doctors were idealized, they and their less well-rounded colleagues emerged from a schooling process that paid little heed to the broader medical and health needs of Canadian society. It was a system that rewarded those who learned to cultivate the right connections, and stifled the

advancement of women and those with unpopular ethnic backgrounds. The practice of medicine and the training of its students thus embraced the scientific advances, the special economic opportunities, and the social biases offered up by the middle-class communities from which future doctors generally originated. (76)

The subtitle of his book is slightly misleading. Though it does indeed include a chapter on "Associational Life: The Extracurriculum" and even an insert of 16 pages of photographs and cartoons mostly dealing with student activities, this is not the book's major emphasis. On the contrary, student activities are discussed primarily in terms of their utility in socializing young Canadians in the skills and attitudes of the upper-middle class of the time. Though Axelrod's account is concrete enough, it conveys very little sense that the students of the 1930s were enjoying their often rough and raunchy pleasures. They may have been, but what interests him is the way their evolving social patterns imbued them with the skills, contacts and values that would serve them in their later economic life.

Axelrod's discussion of these processes is comprehensive and masterful. It begins with a lucid historical account of the growth of universities in Canada and the evolution of professional education: his treatment of the development of schools of engineering and their policies is especially valuable because it is relatively unfamiliar. The demography of higher education in Canada through the 1930s is presented in detail through both text and statistical tables.

The chapter on "Politics and Social Change: The Student Movement," though illuminating, seems rather muted. So, of course, was student political activity, subject to severe and consistent repression and surveillance by the RCMP from the depression years on till the present. Axelrod is especially effective in contrasting the tolerance of university authorities toward quite destructive student pranks and their vigilance against political dissent.

This then is how the Canadian middle class was made during the Depression years. Axelrod is clear, sharp and consistent in his portrayal of what this gruesome process entails. Consider his comment quoted above about medical education, and the following on legal education:

As one Toronto lawyer put it, "In order that a man may attain the position, in society, that his profession commands, with as little delay as possible, all but the most essential academic studies should be eliminated." (85)

Axelrod notes, too, that in this respect, if no other, universities were equally solicitous of the social welfare of women students. Of sororities:

Their social and cultural potential was identified in a letter from an Alberta professor endorsing the recognition of a Pi Beta Phi sorority at another university. "The families from which these girls come represent an excellent cross-section of the best features of our Canadian life in the west. That assures you of the soundness of their social backgrounds—surely a very important factor in influencing your decision. They are distinctly well connected in all branches of business and professional life." (107)

Was it all as crass as this? Perhaps; though these were, after all, young men and women capable of passion, protest, and personal and political commitment. They must have taken a lot of stifling in the process. Axelrod's evidence that they did is strong and convincing. But for that very reason, his book is rather paradoxical. So much evidence: yet, ultimately, no indictment? Axelrod has written a convincing account of *The Making of a Middle Class*. Mary Shelley might have written a more compelling one.

Dalhousie University

Edgar Friedenberg

***A Bridge Built Halfway: A History of Memorial University College, 1925-1950.* By Malcolm MacLeod. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1990. Pp. xxx, 376. \$34.95.**

During the past decade, professionally written histories of a number of Canadian universities have appeared, bringing new perspectives to the discussion of Canada's intellectual, educational and cultural development. The appearance of Malcolm MacLeod's volume is a welcome addition, dealing as it does with the history of Memorial in the "pre-Canadian" era.

MacLeod's purpose is to examine the founding and evolution of Memorial University College, and to show that "the disappointingly slow development of Memorial College . . . faithfully mirrored Newfoundland's socioeconomic and constitutional difficulties at that time" (xiii). He carefully explains the island's educational structure, providing an important reminder of just how different Newfoundland's development in this area was from that of the Maritime provinces, and links this to the triumph of a

national rather than denominational approach to higher education. He attributes the founding of the college in 1925 to the more co-operative attitude of Roman Catholic authorities, a movement to find a suitable war memorial, the generosity of American benefactors and the movement for university federation in Nova Scotia. Each of these elements is carefully examined and well explained.

Throughout the study the importance of the Canadian connection is stressed. It was not with Britain but with the nearer Maritime Provinces and even Quebec and Ontario that academic links were forged during this period. The author implies but does not directly state the importance this would have in the debate over Confederation in 1948-49.

Because of the short time-span covered and the relatively small number of students involved, MacLeod is able to provide important data concerning the student population. Using material gathered through extensive interviews and questionnaires, he is able to analyse the student body by sex, age, academic background, place of origin, class, motivation and future careers. It is in this area that MacLeod makes his most important and interesting contributions to our understanding of university life during those decades.

The book ends rather abruptly, giving the reader no information as to how or why the decision to create a degree granting institution was taken. At other times the detail is more extensive than is really necessary, making the book longer than the college's twenty-five years would seem to warrant.

These minor criticisms aside, MacLeod has produced a readable, informative and significant book that sheds much light not only on Memorial College itself but on the history of Newfoundland in those crucial three decades before its union with Canada.